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Everybody's

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ALD WRIGHT KAUFFMAN
a complete Novel

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E SAUNDERS
brilliant
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Everybody's

NUMBER FIVE NOVEMBER, 1923 VOLUME XLIX

If It's in Everybody's It's a Good Story

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ke a divine voice the music stole through the thick night, weaving a song of vanished happiness. . . .
. Come, come—it implored to a far-away loveliness that it knew could never come.

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A Distinguished Story by a New Author

Little Sacrifices

Small Things May Be Symbolic—and in This Story Is Raised a Question That Must Be Answered in Many Lives

By Louise Saunders

Illustrations by Joseph A. Maturo

MISS DINSMORE was alone in her garden. Down on her knees, her tweed skirt protected by a piece of matting, her large hands heavily gloved, she loosened with a trowel the earth that clamped the roots of her heliotrope. Like a cloud, the rich, sweet scent of heliotrope hung over the garden. The roses, the little wheel-like flowers of the phlox, the larkspur—all seemed to be enveloped, floating in an almost perceptibly amethystine fragrance that emanated from the purple clusters. It was very quiet. Near by a bee droned intermittently as he fumbled, casually, from flower to flower, droned his little black thread of sound, made the silence audible. Here, thought Miss Dinsmore, was life at its best. Unhurried work, necessary work accomplished among the passive receptivities of growing things. Here was peace.

Outside her evergreen hedges surged another world—restlessness, tension, emotion, necessity—forces that knocked people together, drove them apart, lifted them high, flung them down, as if they were pieces of wreckage in an ever moving sea. She was happy to be apart from it for a time, to feel herself merely a humble tirewoman ministering to the needs of simple beauty.

Brenda was playing golf somewhere. She had come tumbling down the stairs that morning, dragging her clubs after her. "Good-by, Mattie," she had called, above the slam of the screen door. She climbed into the car, without troubling to open the door, showing a length of effective stocking, and was off before Miss Dinsmore had time to reply or beg her to take a sweater. Strange, that Brenda should be her niece. She was so vivid, hot, velvety, like a nasturtium! Miss Dinsmore remembered her brother's letter. "Won't you let Brenda come to you for a week or two?" he had written. "She needs a rest." Rest! She smiled hopelessly. Brenda had been immediately popular. Every one wanted her, invited her. Perhaps it was just as well. She needed excitement. It intensified her.

Miss Dinsmore sat back on her thick boots and adjusted her glasses. Three apples lay in the placid water of the pool. What a delightful thing was an apple tree! It had none of the grandeur of the pine, none of its dark dignity; still it seemed to hold in its branches such kindly optimism, like that of simple cheerful people. Hers, she decided, would need pruning next year. A few stalks of larkspur leaned sideways, beaten down by last night's rain. She took a ball of twine from her basket and carefully tied them back.

The gate clicked. Oh, dear, what a pity, on this perfect morning that she did so want to devote to her garden! Perhaps it was a caller for Brenda. She hoped so. A pale blue figure appeared on the veranda. Ursula, of course. Dear Ursula, she mustn't let her see—— "Are you working in the garden?" asked Ursula, seriously, as if she really wanted to know.

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Miss Dinsmore understood that Ursula had asked the superfluous, the unnecessary question because she never knew quite what to say when she was expected to be casual, so she borrowed phrases from other people. She could give the good, strong cloth, spun of the thoughts in her mind, but she was always unable to manage the lacy edges of conversation.

"Oh, just pottering about," answered Miss Dinsmore, gaily. She seated herself on one of the two wide steps of the veranda.

Ursula announced, in the bright tone of a bearer of good news: "I've brought the children. They wanted to look at the goldfish so I told them that they might if they promised not to touch the bowl. Perhaps I had better see if they are getting into mischief."

"Don't. They are quite all right. What possible harm could they do?"

"You want to see them, don't you?" She turned back—hurt.

"Of course, my dear," said Miss Dinsmore, "but let me talk to you a little first. They are always with you."

"Yes. I like to have them. Where is Brenda?" she asked, after a pause.

"Brenda has sprung off into space and, really, the whole house seems to sway back and forth for a time after she has gone, like a springboard. It's disconcerting to an old woman like me—and interesting."

"Rudolph went to play golf—he won't be back for lunch." She rose again. "I really think that I had better see——"

MISS DINSMORE watched her as she walked around the house. She was so beautiful, with her mass of dun-colored hair and her highbred grave face—but curiously blank too, like an unlighted lantern. How potent she might be if only she could be made aware of her own possible effectiveness, could acquire a conscious grace of mind and body! It seemed to be there, muted. Was it there? Or had nature hurriedly mated that tall slim body to an awkward soul that could know no uses for it except the strictly utilitarian?

She came back, leading a little boy in a blue jersey suit. He was thinking of the goldfish floating, like orange feathers, in the pale green bowl, of their flat round eyes and their little triangular mouths, nipping at the edges of the water. There was a drowned castle too, dotted with tiny bubbles, and bubbles rose lazily from the pebbles on the bottom. Mother always came and took you away when you had found something really interesting—something that you wanted to see for a long, long time.

"Say how do you do to Miss Dinsmore," commanded Ursula.

"How do you do, Miss Dinsmore?" John repeated obediently. A gay butterfly wavered near, then settled on a flower. He watched its little thin black legs crawling over the pinkness. "Nothing there," the butterfly seemed to say and was gone.

"Muriel, speak to Miss Dinsmore."

Muriel bobbed a curtsy. She was tall, like Ursula, with fine hair, almost white, and pale *chine* blue eyes. John was dark like his father, and sturdy. Such nice children, both of them, thought Miss Dinsmore, but she secretly preferred John. Muriel was a little tame, a little too eager to enter the world of grown-ups where she would soon be in her element. John lived quite apart.

Ursula quite forgot herself as her children stood before Miss Dinsmore. She was so painfully anxious that they should make a good impression that she melted into them, moved with them, almost dropped a curtsy with Muriel as if she could hypnotize them with the force of her own mind, into good behavior. They were beautifully dressed, like children in a picture book. Her heart seemed to run with hot pride as she looked at them.

"Don't you want to play in the garden?" suggested Miss Dinsmore. "There are three big red apples in the pool. See if you can fish them out."

John looked up at his mother, questioningly. What fun to fish them out! Would that be "mischief"?

"Oh, Martha!" reproached Ursula. "He would be sure to get his feet wet. He always does and he is so subject to colds."

"I could find a long stick with leaves on the end and make waves," pleaded John. "They would come in on waves."

"Well," said Ursula, frowning under the weight of her decision, "if Muriel goes to see that he doesn't get into mischief——"

"There are lots of apples on the grass," said Muriel, pertly.

"But I want the ones in the pond." He continued to look up at his mother's face.

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Ursula shook her head. "Take care of him, Muriel," she warned.

"It's so silly of him when there are loads on the grass," she complained, moving off, reluctantly.

"They are very wonderful, aren't they?" mused Miss Dinsmore. "Think of your having created them, snatched from God knows where, two little beings with such different personalities! It's marvelous, like most of the things we take for granted."

"Yes," said Ursula. "Children bring more happiness than anything else in the world. I wish that Rudolph——" She stopped and colored, painfully, twisting her long fingers together.

Miss Dinsmore looked up. "Doesn't Rudy appreciate them?"

"Oh, yes, he delights in them and they love him almost more than they do me, I sometimes think, but he lets them alone. He never *plans* for them. I don't believe he even thinks of them when they are away from him. They might almost be some one else's children."

"You never call him Rudy," remarked Miss Dinsmore, irrelevantly. "Why? Every one else does."

Ursula's mouth pursed into an expression of scorn. "Of course not," she answered. "One doesn't use diminutives in speaking of the people one loves."

No, she wouldn't. Love was a grave thing to her, a holy thing not to be talked about. She shrouded it deep from the eyes of the careless passer-by as a priest guards the Host, but always she was conscious of it within her, hers, this love, this dark, wondrous possession that made the significance of her life. And she had builded this altar to Rudy Thayer, who was as careless and irresponsible as she was painstaking and dependable, whose swift, easy magnetism charmed as her awkward reserve chilled every one they knew!

Ursula leaned forward. "When people have grown to be as old as he and I——"

"My *dear*," interrupted Miss Dinsmore.

"WELL, we are middle-aged, past thirty—I *like* being middle-aged. They ought to cease to think about themselves. The coming generation is the only thing that matters. He has two wonderful children. Why can't he be content to sit back, quietly, with me, planning for their future, finding pleasure only in their pleasures, living in them and for them? My life would be so perfect then!"

This was rare. Ursula never discussed her family affairs with other people. Miss Dinsmore felt a little uncomfortable, unequal to the magnitude of the occasion. "Perhaps," she suggested, "he helps them as much in his own way as you do."

"But, Martha, he only *plays* with them—when he happens to be in the mood for it, funny things that they make up themselves, not even instructive games and"—she gave a final despairing gesture—"he wants us to move to New York! Think of it!"

"Plenty of nice children——"

"I know," said Ursula, "but it isn't right. And besides, we simply can't afford it."

Miss Dinsmore looked surprised. "I always thought—that you could afford anything you chose."

"Oh, *no!*" Ursula hated to have people speak of her wealth. It was vulgar to be rich. "Besides, it would be so unnecessarily expensive, that is, if we tried to give them all they have here. And we should have to discharge Meeker; we couldn't keep a butler in town and Robinson—— They have been with us for years, before I married. We are settled here nicely until they grow up." She crossed her knees, bunching her skirts ungracefully. "He ought to play the game. He really ought."

With a sharp twig, Miss Dinsmore thoughtfully scraped at the mud on the sole of her boot. Rudy Thayer—in a city, full of life and color—Budapest, Paris, even New York—yes, that undoubtedly was his background; but Ursula—— She gave it up, and threw away the twig. "Has he been doing anything with his music lately?"

"Oh, of *course*, I want him to go on with his music," said Ursula, earnestly. "I help him in every way I can. Sometimes, in the evening, I bring him his violin or put paper and nicely sharpened pencils on the table hoping that he will compose or play something. I sit down quietly with my sewing. I never even speak to him but he only plays a few bars, then he wanders about the room, or goes out for a walk."

"Perhaps if you left him alone——"

"Why should I?" demanded Ursula, indignantly. "He ought to want to have me there. I never make any noise. And"—she leaned forward, exasperated—"when he

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does work he chooses such silly times for it, way into the night, sometimes until two o'clock! Honestly, Martha, I can't be expected to allow that. He needs sleep, like any other normal person."

"Artists, my dear, are seldom normal people," said Miss Dinsmore, gently, "in your sense of the word."

"But *Martha*," she leaned back and covered her eyeswith her hand. "I can't rest, any more than if one of the children were wandering about. I have to lie awake, waiting, until I know that he is in bed—and safe."

The garden hung quiet in the yellow light of midday. On either side of the grassy paths, leading to the pool and the apple trees, the many-colored flowers dreamed, in the warm air. Against soft blue overhead, floated a little puffy cloud, dazzling white. Couldn't we, wondered Miss Dinsmore, learn from these things, so disinterested, so content in their mere existence? Only mortals demanded from one another, interfered, got in each other's way because they loved or hated or envied. Suppose that a mignonette should love a hollyhock. Suppose that she should expect the hollyhock to bend down to her, change his blossoms from rose to yellow-green. And suppose that the hollyhock, because he loved the mignonette, believed that he ought to do what she expected of him.

She looked with aching pity at Ursula, huddled ungracefully in the wicker chair, good fine Ursula, desolate on this lovely morning because Rudy Thayer's paths were not her paths, his desires not her desires.

By the pool sat Muriel in her crisp white dress, gazing at her shoes and twisting around her forefinger a strand of her straight, cream-colored hair. John was solemnly ruffling the water with his leafy branch. The apples bobbed up and down. They seemed to be coming nearer. He leaned over and fell, sprawling, into the pond.

"Oh!" shrieked Ursula. "He's fallen in! I knew he would. Muriel!" She flew down the path. Miss Dinsmore followed.

"It isn't deep," she said, reassuringly.

"But he'll catch cold——" Her voice shook. "John *darling*."

John stood up, dripping. He brushed the wet hair from his eyes, then waded deliberately further and grasped an apple in his square little hand. "I've got one," he said, turning toward them with a smile.

"Come out this minute," commanded Ursula. She clasped him frantically to her, heedless of her fresh dress and white shoes, happy again in her excitement, rejoicing in her immediate authority. "Martha, can you lend me a shawl, or something?"

John sat at last in the car beside his mother, swathed in Miss Dinsmore's thick gray cloak, the glistening apple in his hand Muriel bounced on the back seat.

"Good-by," called Ursula. "I must take him right home. Good-by." She was gone.

Miss Dinsmore turned slowly to the garden.

LATE in the afternoon, when the shadows lay long on the grass and the sky was a pale gold, brushed with clouds of cobalt, purple and rose, Brenda came back. She flung herself down and threw off her hat, ruffling her dark hair. Miss Dinsmore was finishing a solitary tea. "Give me a cup, Mattie, dear. I'm famished!"

"Did you have a pleasant day?" asked Miss Dinsmore, pouring an amber stream of tea into one of her gaily decorated thick Italian cups, and feeling, after she had spoken, that her vocabulary was strangely lacking in adjectives that might describe a day of Brenda's. Did the generation before hers feel as alien toward her as she felt toward this slender young girl, barely nineteen, who seemed, in her clear honesty, her direct way of looking at life, uninfluenced by sentiment or tradition, more mature than Miss Dinsmore herself? There was a certain cleanness about her, though she was untender, almost hard. One felt that she knew so clearly what she wanted and would get it if she could. Should she fail, she would only look with ironic contempt at her failure. Tears, lamentations, appeals for sympathy from her friends would be as foreign to her nature as the bustles and chignons of the seventies.

"Pleasant? Well, not altogether," said Brenda, taking huge bites out of a piece of toast. "However, it had its points." She smiled, reflectively. "What have you been doing?"

She didn't really want to know. Miss Dinsmore realized that, still——

"Oh, I've had a wonderful time in the garden. Please notice how effectively I have weeded the flower beds."

"Not a weed," said Brenda, staring at the

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garden. "But there never is. As soon as one sticks its head out of the ground, you pounce on it." She played with her tea, lifting it up on the spoon. "They'd jolly well do for your heliotrope if you gave them a chance."

"Of course. That's why I don't give them a chance. You are not on the side of the weeds, are you?"

"Oh, I don't know," she answered listlessly. "Things that have to be helped like that aren't much good. Didn't any one come to see you?"

"Yes," Miss Dinsmore hesitated. "Ursula, for a minute."

"Ursula! I thought she would." With a lazy smile she leaned back and stretched out her arms, opening and shutting her fingers, looking sideways at her aunt. "Dear old Mattie, you're wonderful. Do you never tire of having confidences poured into you?"

Miss Dinsmore, without reply, extinguished the alcohol flame and busied herself with the cups and saucers. "More toast?" she asked, holding out the plate.

"No, thanks." She continued to look, still with that lazy smile, at Miss Dinsmore. It was embarrassing. What could she know of Ursula and her troubles?

With relief, Miss Dinsmore watched her spring to her feet, a straight, boyish figure in her frock of dull orange. Beautiful—yes, she was undoubtedly that, not with perfection of line, like Ursula, but because of her fluid grace, the vitality that burned within her, swayed her like a flame. She looked out over the garden, and, even as she stood there, unmoving, her hands on her hips, she seemed charged, electric. What would happen to her? It was dangerous to be so gorgeously alive.

"Her children were with her, of course."

"Yes." Miss Dinsmore looked worried. "Poor little Jack fell into the pool. It upset Ursula dreadfully. I feel rather guilty about it, as I suggested his playing there."

Brenda turned about with a sudden, unaccountable access of interest. "I hope that once he was in she let him paddle about a bit; or did she drag him out? Tell me."

"Oh, my dear," protested Miss Dinsmore, "she had to make him come out. He might have caught cold."

"Huh!" Brenda gave a short laugh. "She lets him go in the brook. I suppose his bathing suit acts as a preventive. Logic, Mattie dear—that's what all mothers lack."

"When you are a mother," replied Miss Dinsmore, taking up the tea tray, "you will find that it's not as simple as you think."

"Oh, they make too much fuss about it. I'd give them a good time and let it go."

As Miss Dinsmore rinsed the tea things, she could see Brenda throwing a tennis ball with a strong arm against the house and catching it again, lithe as a snake. Bang! crashed the ball against the house. Bang!—bang! Miss Dinsmore trembled for her upstairs windows. Suddenly there was silence, then: "It went in your room, Mattie," called Brenda from the hall. "Hope it didn't smash anything. I'm going to dress."

WHEN Miss Dinsmore went to bed that night, the tennis ball lay, a bland, innocuous little object, between her pillows. She placed it on the table with her spectacles and her book, and put out the light.

Darkness enveloped her as she stood by the window, darkness drooped over the garden, soft mysterious darkness made faintly luminous by the half moon. The distant pines raggedly blackened the edge of the night-blue sky and the flower beds, miraculously drained of their color, were soft masses of gray along the paths. She heard the deep damp croak of frogs from the hidden pool and the recurrent tiny shrilling of the toads, like infinitesimal tambourines. In the west, as she casually lifted her eyes, she saw, with the thrill of wonder, the soundless flight of a falling star!

Her bed loomed, a bulky shadow among the lesser shadows in the room. She took off her slippers and her dressing gown and slipped, with a sigh of satisfaction, between the cool sheets.

Down the long, dim alley of her sleep something was approaching. Far away, like a procession glimpsed at the end of a narrow street, it came. Nearer—nearer—something insistent, demanding attention, yet tender, unbelievably beautiful, of unearthly sweetness. Nearer—nearer—until, suddenly her sleep caved inward and she was awake. Music! Some one was playing a violin in the garden! She looked at the illuminated dial of her watch. A quarter to one! She sat up in bed and listened.

It was evidently a Russian peasant dance, a thing of mad swirls and plucked strings.

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She seemed to see a long, low room, filled with smoky blue light and a dancing girl, slim like Brenda in gay Russian costume, spending herself, stamping, tossing her arms, doubling, caught in the wild, fierce music like a leaf in a whirlpool.

Rudy Thayer! It must be he. There was no one else. Yet she had never heard him play like that. One couldn't think of his instrument. The music seemed to flow through it, not from it, free, unshackled, inevitably perfect, a colored stream of poignant sound. When it stopped it was as if a light went out, a light the reflection of which still hung faintly behind the darkness of one's closed eyelids. She waited, hoping he would play again, but the silence was absolute except for the tiny ticking of her watch and the croak of the frogs.

What a strange fellow he was, wandering about at such a time of night with his violin! Poor Ursula, who always went to her room at ten o'clock, who lay awake, waiting for him! It was hard for her. Still, she was glad it had happened. It was a wonderful experience to be awakened from sleep like that. It was like renascence after death.

She wondered if Brenda had heard. In her soft slippers, she tiptoed into the hall and softly opened her door. Brenda was not there! She had not gone to bed. In the moonlight the flat surface of her bed glimmered, undisturbed, the sheet folded back, a pair of limp stockings thrown across it. Her orange frock of the morning lay, in a huddled heap, on the floor by the dressing table. As she stood there alone, a chill fear swept over Miss Dinsmore's heart. Where was she? Out there with Rudy Thayer in the darkness? "Rudolph won't be home for lunch," she remembered Ursula's words. Had she been with him all day? It was preposterous! People, her kind of people, didn't behave like that.

Softly, almost imperceptibly, the music began again. Like a divine voice, it stole through the thick night, weaving a song of vanished happiness, of unbearable yearning, of the sadness that lies at the heart of all beautiful things. Come, come—it implored to a far-away loveliness that it knew could never come. It could never come, that was why the voice sang, remembering—telling and retelling its pure wondrous sorrow. And it was exquisite, far more exquisite than joy could ever be, this sweet, drenching pain that melted all to tears!

It rose higher, higher, leaving the golden low notes behind. Come, come—— Oh! it was agony! Higher, up to the regions of ecstasy of anguish—higher, until it died away on a long, keen note, like a thread of gleaming ice!

Miss Dinsmore couldn't move. She felt drained, exhausted. Was this what happened to us when we forsook the serene middle places and looked too high or too low? She felt that it was wrong. Better to live among dull common things, unknowing, far better to die than to bring one's quivering soul to such perils.

Presently she heard a faint sound downstairs. Some one was opening the door. Striking a match, she lighted one of the candles on the dressing table and brought it with her into the hall. In the feeble light she saw Brenda, her hand on the stair rail, looking up at her. "Did you hear it, Mattie?" she whispered, her eyes shining. "Wasn't it wonderful!"

"Who was it?" asked Miss Dinsmore.

"Rudy Thayer, of course. Did you think it was Kreisler? That last thing in a minor was impromptu. Oh, he is a great artist. He could beat them all, if he had a chance."

SHE leaned, with her back to the wall, her hands behind her, her face lifted as if she were still listening, reliving the music, apart from her surroundings in a dream of exquisite memory. And she was quite unembarrassed, perfectly at ease, natural.

"Don't you think," said Miss Dinsmore, "that it was a little unconventional, under the circumstances, to have allowed Rudy Thayer to stay here until one o'clock playing to you?"

She didn't answer. Except for a slight stiffening of her body, she might not have heard.

"Please answer me," insisted Miss Dinsmore.

She closed her eyes a moment, then looked up. "Yes, I think it was unconventional," she said, with slow coldness. "What of it?"

"My dear, for the present you are under my care and I must insist that you refrain from doing foolish things that people might misunderstand."

She raised her eyebrows. "Really, I wasn't aware that I was under your care,

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Aunt Martha. I thought that I was paying you a visit."

She looked indeed very much a woman of the world as she stood there in her smart gown of dark red chiffon, draped in front to show her satin slippers with their jet buckles and huge tongues, black like her hair. She was a finished product, perfect, and it did seem a little absurd to think of protecting one of her delicate poise and self-assurance; still, Miss Dinsmore remembered, she was only nineteen, a little girl, really.

"May I ask," Brenda inquired, "whether it is the position of the hands of the clock that you object to or whether you think that he ought not to come to play for me at all?"

"Brenda, *dear*, you don't understand." She sat down on the top step and drew her quilted dressing gown about her, feeling strangely clumsy under Brenda's rapier-like interrogations. "There's Ursula—you didn't know of course, but she can't sleep when Rudy is out. It troubles her."

Brenda stared at her darkly. "I suppose she thinks that shows her love for him!" she said with a shrug. "Poor Rudy! When a man imposes on his wife that way it might be considered a compliment, since women after dark are supposedly helpless, but when a woman does it, it merely indicates—lack of poise. She is like an octopus."

"Brenda, you mustn't say such things," remonstrated Miss Dinsmore, thoroughly shocked. "She does love him. She is completely bound up in him!"

"Bound up in him!" She gave a little shiver of disgust. "Bound up in him. Ugh! What a thought!"

She leaned back, her head lifted as before, thinking. She seemed to have dropped the conversation, left it as a thing of no importance. Miss Dinsmore looked at her, undecided. Perhaps she ought to go to bed. After all——

"I know, my dear," she said at last, taking up the candle and rising to her feet, "that of course there is really nothing wrong in your seeing so much of Rudy. In my day things were so different— Please don't misunderstand me, it's just—" She stopped.

"No, I don't misunderstand you, Mattie. As a matter of fact, according to your point of view, there is something wrong in it since we are, as they call it, in love with each other."

Miss Dinsmore caught her breath. She felt as if she had been slapped.

"Brenda!" she cried in horror.

Brenda continued to look, with gloomy eyes, in front of her.

"I do think that wrong——"

"I thought you would," Brenda commented, listlessly.

"Thank you," Miss Dinsmore was able to say. "That, at least, is gratifying."

She felt an absurd desire to weep as she always did when people whom she loved and respected wrecked the fine standards that she had taken, as a matter of course, to be as inviolate to them as they were to her. "Noblesse oblige"—and there was only one nobility in this world of blown ideals, that composed of the few rare spirits who adhered rigidly to the idea of integrity and truth, only one lower class made up of those of coarser grain who had abandoned that idea. It was to Miss Dinsmore a terrible revelation of earthiness in Brenda that she could make such a statement without any attempt at self-justification, without, apparently, thinking that she needed justification. "I must talk with you," she said, gravely.

"Goodness, Mattie, not now! You'll be tired out. Let it go until morning."

"Now, of course, since you have chosen this time to honor me with your confidence. I find it impossible to treat this matter as lightly as you seem to treat it."

"All right." She moved carelessly toward the living-room. "Only come down here. There is still some fire left. I'll put a log on. And Mattie," she added, coming back and leaning over the stair rail, "put on your spectacles, or you will have a headache."

When she came down the stairs, in her spectacles, she saw that Brenda had lighted the lamp and left the shade tilted in her usual untidy way of doing things. She was standing by the fire, lighting a cigarette.

"Mattie darling, you're such a duck." She threw the match away and looked up with a smile. "Don't let it upset you. *You* needn't bother."

Miss Dinsmore straightened the lamp shade carefully, then sat down on the lounge, facing Brenda, her hands limp in her lap. "I would like, if possible," she began, "to make you see my point of view, the point of view of an older woman about—about what you have just said to me. I am not naturally as clever as you are, I know that,

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but I am a little wiser because I have watched life longer. I have lived to see the dreary consequences that always follow an impetuous disregard of accepted things. Brenda, dear, you are so very young. You don't realize, you can't know what love is."

"Then it's only the old, you think, who understand love?"

"I think that love, real love, is no sudden thing. It grows from long association, the sharing of mutual responsibilities, mutual troubles and happiness."

BRENDA smiled, looking down at the fire, but said nothing.

"Ursula's love has firm roots because of their children, because of the experiences they have had together."

Brenda turned at this and said, vehemently: "They haven't experienced anything together. She doesn't touch him at any point. He has always been quite apart. Ursula, the whole Ursula atmosphere stifles him— Oh, he didn't tell me," she broke in impatiently, as Miss Dinsmore started to speak. "He wouldn't, but I know. Think of his face, that windy free look he has, his eyes— Oh, I can't expect you to see, you and Ursula— You are aristocrats with your delight in beautiful material things, your insistence on restraint in hangings and chairs and conduct and gardens, then to the devil with the rest of it. You like to be up to your eyes in that sort of thing. We hate it. I'd throw away any possession, however costly, if it bothered me. I'd rather drink all my life out of a china mug from the ten-cent store than trouble to take care of a beautiful one. We're not aristocrats, we're gipsies." She watched the wavering smoke from her cigarette a while in silence. "After all," she went on at last, "what you want to do is to buy Ursula's peace of mind with Rudy's peace of mind. You think that right. I think that Rudy's content should be bought with Ursula's since I consider his to be more important, more valuable; but at least you will admit that the odds are even on both sides."

"I do not admit it at all," said Miss Dinsmore, firmly. "She is married to him. You seem to have forgotten that minor point. However he may feel about it, nothing can be done. It's final."

Brenda stared at her uncomprehendingly; then she smiled, a twisted smile, her brows dark. "Good heavens, Mattie, you're antiquated!" she exclaimed.

"Loyalty is not antiquated, my dear, nor, I'm sorry to say, are selfishness and irresponsibility particularly new."

"How prettily she says it! But you're wrong, Mattie." With a swift movement she dropped beside her on the floor and emphasized her words with a slim forefinger on Miss Dinsmore's knee. "You're— wrong!" She leaned back, her hands clasping her knees. "Loyalty is all very well but, when you say it, you mean only one kind of loyalty. How about loyalty to himself— to his art, since Rudy is an artist? Here he has this—" she searched for the word impatiently—"this thing that God, or whatever you call it, put there, cramped, dwarfed, because he *does* feel his obligation to her, because, if he lived the sort of life he ought to lead, it would distress her, since she couldn't follow.

"Look at what he has done now, even under these deadening circumstances! If he were free to try, if he nourished his talent instead of starving it— Think of allowing it to grow!" She drew a long breath. "Think of giving it light and air, letting it expand to its full stature, big, overpowering; a giant genius, that's what it would be. Could anything be more wonderful? And she expects to keep him stuck here," she added with sudden heat, "like a raisin in a pudding!" Sitting cross-legged on the floor, with her elbows on her knees, her clenched fists pressing her cheeks, she waited for a time, then went on slowly: "The thing we ought to do is to wander about until he forgets this cooked-up existence he has been living—take life raw for a time and then—he could work."

There was silence, broken only by the soft hissing of the flames. Miss Dinsmore fought down an inclination to agree on the perfection of such an arrangement for these two creatures, so alike in their poignant reaction to elemental beauty. Both of them as indifferent to the interests of ordinary people as are wild birds indifferent to the fowl clucking below them in a farmyard. She searched for a reply as Brenda rose and stood again with her back to the fire.

"And the worst of it is," Brenda went on, "she'd love, she'd cling to any one who belonged to her. . . . Well, let her find

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"Let him alone," said Rudy. He put the violin in its case. "He's right. It's not meant for that."

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some other man to be her paterfamilias instead of trying to squeeze Rudy Thayer into it."

"Brenda, you are saying most dreadful things!"

"I'm saying the truth, if you would only look at it with unprejudiced eyes. She's had her chance to hold him and failed. He doesn't love her. What's the sense in her going on, dragging at him? There *isn't* any sense in it."

She turned to the mantel and lighted another cigarette. Miss Dinsmore watched her with a heavy heart. She felt ineffably sad, hopeless.

"I think," she said slowly, "that you are very cruel. It's horrible!"

"Oh," Brenda tossed her head, irritably tapping her slippered foot on the fender. "Some one has to be cruel as things are. You want it to be Ursula, that's all."

"He did love her once," insisted Miss Dinsmore. "He promised at the altar to love her."

"Promised to love!" She gave a contemptuous laugh. "You know quite well that you can't promise to love any more than you can promise never to grow bald. Besides, he didn't make it up. It was in the marriage service. It went with the bridesmaids!" She threw back her head. "Think of going off arm in arm with Rudy Thayer! The adventure of it! She didn't see the point, did she? I'll wager that she lathered it all over with white flowers and publicity."

"It was a beautiful wedding," said Miss Dinsmore, with dignity, thinking of that long, slow procession down the church aisle, the turning of heads as Ursula passed, with lowered eyes, in her veil of old lace.

"Oh, I've no doubt it was worth buying a ticket to see. What fools some women are!"

"HER father and mother didn't approve," Miss Dinsmore reflected further. "We thought that it was because he was a musician. They come of such solid stock, the best, but unimaginative. They had such people's instinctive fear of artists and their kind. Perhaps, too, they had a feeling that this might happen, that he wasn't quite worthy of her—for he hasn't been worthy of her, has he?"

"Why not? He has given up more for her than she could ever realize."

"But now—" She leaned forward, searching Brenda's face. "Brenda, you confuse me so. Can you think that he is worthy of her now, after what has happened?"

Brenda sighed and put her elbow on the mantelpiece, her cheek on her hand. "Oh, I don't know," she said wearily. "What does it matter? Who cares whether people are worthy of them or not? It's seldom the worthy who make us happy. He's not my lover, if that's what you mean, although—" Her eyes darkened, then she relaxed, dropping her arm. "But there's no use in that. It never leads to anything. He must be free."

Miss Dinsmore felt suddenly impotent, indignant, yet unable under the sharp impact of Brenda's words, to express her indignation. It was as if she had been all this time, struggling under a relentless hose that squirted a stream of water in her face, shocking her, scattering her efforts, knocking her down. "Please be good enough to believe," she said frigidly, "that knowing you as I do, I could mean nothing of the sort."

"Didn't you?" came Brenda's indifferent voice. "I should think that you very well might have. No, he must be free, or"—she threw her cigarette in the fire and gave the smoldering logs a kick, then turned about with a little stamp of her foot—"or he must give it up."

"Give what up?" asked Miss Dinsmore, bewildered.

"His work, his music."

"But that isn't at all necessary. He can amuse himself with it, play for his friends."

"Play for his friends! My word!" She drew in her breath sharply, through her teeth. "He's not an amateur. There isn't a soul here who knows what he is, except you, perhaps. His originality, his force—They'd coo over him no matter what he gave them. Besides, that sort of thing, like letting an antelope take little runs at the end of a string, would only be a torment to him, keep alive his restlessness. If he can't give his genius what it craves to develop it, he must kill it."

"I should be very sorry to see that happen," said Miss Dinsmore, feeling that here, at last, was firm ground under her feet, "but if there is no alternative, of course, for Ursula's sake, it would be right."

"We're not so sure that it would be right," responded Brenda somberly, "and it certainly wouldn't be done for Ursula."

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"For the children's then, since you insist on ignoring Ursula."

Brenda gazed long at the fire.

"For Jack," she said unexpectedly. "He's a nice little kid but—but is he worth all that? I don't know."

"Of course he is," urged Miss Dinsmore, quickly. "Of course."

"The girl is all right," she went on, ignoring her, "but there's Rudy in Jack. His mother doesn't understand him. She might very well ruin him. She'd try her best to do it. It's terrible, the idea of abandoning him to her. God, what a—what a mess!"

For the first time, Miss Dinsmore felt in sympathy with her as she stood there in her proud young strength, so scornful of help, so inexorable in her determination to rely only on herself for guidance. But Miss Dinsmore seized on this, the first evidence of a possible step in the direction in which she, so passionately, desired her to go.

"Jack *does* need his father," she said. "I quite agree with you in that. And Brenda, dear"—she summoned all her forces—"for your own sake—I feel so strongly, I know that this greedy seizing of the forbidden fruits of life leads inevitably to disgust and weariness. I am not arguing from the conventional point of view. I realize quite well that there are plenty of people who meander along the path of virtue simply because they haven't the courage or the imagination to go elsewhere. You are not one of those. You have great power. You could drive tremendously in one direction or the other and believe me, my dear, only in austerity, in frugality, in a strict following of one's duty can happiness be found."

She waited, while Brenda scrutinized her, with knitted brows, a puzzled look on her face. Had she touched her, had she? The seconds went by and Miss Dinsmore scarcely dared breathe, hoping that the scales would tip on her side; then she saw a smile lifting the corners of Brenda's mouth. She heard her laugh!

"Forgive me, Mattie, but what you have just been saying—it doesn't seem to apply at all. I can't make it fit. Anyway, Rudy has got to decide it. He knows Jack, and he needs me more than I do him. I am an escape for him as well as—the rest. But all that about paths of virtue and fruits really hasn't anything to do with it. I'm sorry." She glanced at the clock. "Mercy! You poor thing! Let's go to bed."

When Miss Dinsmore was back in her room, she felt a certain remorse. Perhaps she had been a little hard. She had knocked on the door of Brenda's reserve armed with a sub-conscious hostility. If she had been more sympathetic it might have opened. The memory of that broken note, so hastily covered up, in Brenda's voice, haunted her. Poor child, she was undoubtedly lying awake, thinking, torturing herself with the memory of their conversation. She resolved to go to her and try in a different way to help, to speak of Jack. She stood outside Brenda's open door a moment, rehearsing what she would say, then went in. But Brenda was asleep! Her clothes were flung about the room and she lay, breathing evenly, as if nothing had happened! These strange young people, thought Miss Dinsmore, as she tiptoed back again, they had no souls. They felt nothing really. They merely accepted or rejected the offerings of fate. It was astonishing to one born in a more sensitive, easily bruised generation. *She* couldn't sleep. Her rest was ruined, at any rate.

"I'M SO happy now, Martha," Ursula's bland gray eyes filled with tears. "I'm so happy," she repeated, looking down at Miss Dinsmore's broad straw hat in her hand.

They were in Ursula's bedroom and Miss Dinsmore was making herself ready for lunch after a long walk over the muddy roads. It was a spacious room, bright, in perfect order. One felt that it would always be like that. Outside the curtained windows, the yellow leaves twinkled endlessly down, and were tossed by the wind into restless patches on the wet grass. Summer had gone. The earth was gorgeously touched with ruin, like an overripe fruit. But the disorder, the rich abandonment to decay, so rampant outside, could have no influence there, in that fresh room. That would never change. It was as static, as unfading, as a gay flower made of metal. The pictures, covered with shining glass, fitted with geometrical exactness into their allotted places on the walls. One felt that they had been chosen for their size. A Japanese print, long and narrow, hung in the long narrow space, between the plump

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beds and the girl with the broken pitcher, who is ever confined to bedrooms, gazed wistfully at a solemn photograph of the Coliseum over the mantelpiece. Poor thing, Miss Dinsmore thought, it must frighten her; but she turned at Ursula's words, putting down the heavy, silver-backed hairbrush.

"I'm glad," she said. "Tell me."

Ursula stroked carefully the velvet ribbon on the hat. "Rudolph," she began, "is so different." She looked up and there was glad triumph in her eyes. "He really seems to have settled down! You remember I spoke to you this summer about—well, about his selfishness. I couldn't seem to hold him where I wanted him. He sort of escaped me. But now he is everything that a husband should be. Husband—" Her lips trembled. "You know, Martha, some women are so frivolous—but to me that word has always implied such wonderful things! He is a real husband! We discuss the children and the place and he agrees with me in everything."

"And his music?" inquired Miss Dinsmore, feeling curiously uncomfortable.

"Oh, he has given that up, practically." She laid Miss Dinsmore's hat on a chair and smiled. "Naturally, he finds more pleasure in other things, that we can enjoy together. He *does* teach John. I quite approve of that. We think, Rudy and I, that the child has real talent. You must hear him play a piece on the piano."

"I should like to," replied Miss Dinsmore, with truth.

"And, Martha," she put her hands on Miss Dinsmore's shoulders and gave her an awkward kiss, then drew back, blushing. Caresses embarrassed her and she always regretted, in the painful flood of self-consciousness that followed, having given them.

"Thank you," said Miss Dinsmore in an effort to put her at her ease. "That was sweet of you."

"I feel that you so thoroughly understand," Ursula explained, "and I wish," she gazed at her pityingly, "that you could have what I have."

"Oh, my dear!" protested Miss Dinsmore, hastily. "Please—I am quite happy."

"No one," Ursula announced, with solemnity, "who hasn't a husband and children knows what happiness is."

This was Ursula's very own note and Miss Dinsmore was glad, on the whole, that she felt free to play on it again, still it was with a slight trace of irritation in her voice that she suggested that it was impossible to judge in such matters for other people.

"Martha," she lowered her voice, confidentially, still smiling. "He has begun to make little sacrifices for them!"

"Little sacrifices?" repeated Miss Dinsmore. "Dear Ursula, what can you mean?"

"You know, the little sacrifices in personal comfort and all that. Of course, I have always made them, for him and for the children; I only thought it right. But it pleases me so much to see him doing it. I tell him so. He pretends not to like me to tell him, but that is only because of his modesty. You needn't feel troubled about me any more. I was afraid that you might feel so, after what I said to you, but things have turned out so beautifully!"

They moved down the heavily carpeted stairs together arm in arm and entered the library. Muriel was there, sitting on the floor, her fair hair hiding her face, playing solitaire and Rudy sat in a huge armchair turning over the pages of a book with Jack, who was looking at the pictures with grave absorption.

Miss Dinsmore studied Rudy's face as he came forward and clasped her hand. He had changed. Ursula was right, though perhaps it was well that she couldn't see how deep a change it was. As he stood there, with his back to the fire, he had the inert look of one who has stepped out of an exciting game and is watching, without interest, the others play. It was the look—final, finished, that she had so often noticed on the faces of the very old who no longer hoped, only waited, knowing that all for them was over. Yet Rudy's face was young, beautiful, in its firm, strong lines. He didn't seem unhappy, more indifferently acquiescent, since he was no longer propelled by the dynamic charge of his own personality. He was like a relaxed spring. Still lean as a panther and as graceful, but the panther's suppressed energy that had been so dominant in him before, was gone.

URSULA looked at him fondly and glanced back at Miss Dinsmore, wishing to share her pride in him. "I wonder why lunch is so late," she observed. "Has Meeker announced it?"

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Rudy replied that Meeker had announced it.

"When?"

"About ten minutes ago."

"Oh, Rudolph, why didn't you tell us?" she said reproachfully. "Come, children. John, put down your book at once."

During the substantial, well cooked meal, more like a dinner than a luncheon, Ursula was unusually voluble, admonishing the children, correcting their manners, commenting contentedly on them and on her plans for the winter, but Rudy, except for a few remarks, addressed to Miss Dinsmore on subjects in which he knew she was interested, said little. His eyes, that Miss Dinsmore remembered as being always slightly narrowed, as if in an effort to pierce the hidden, inner meaning of things, were remote, almost dull with lack of interest. A sightless Hermes, listlessly allowing himself to be led about. The simile came poignantly to her. Once she saw him take Jack's stubby little hand from the tablecloth and turn it over, examining it, reflectively.

Later, when they were still in the dining-room, finishing their coffee, raucous sounds came from the library where the children were alone.

"They are playing with your violin!" exclaimed Miss Dinsmore in dismay.

"It sounds like it," observed Rudy. He filled her cup.

"But surely, you don't allow——"

"Oh, it doesn't matter, if it amuses them."

Ursula smiled, complacently. "Anything," she said, "to keep them out of mischief."

"Please!" Miss Dinsmore rose. "Let us see what they are doing."

Muriel was hopping up and down on the hearthrug, holding the violin high above her head and scrubbing the bow on the strings. "Squeak," she laughed. "Squeak. Isn't that charming?"

John stood before her, his eyes blazing. "Stop it."

"Tramp, tramp, tramp, the boys are marching," sang Muriel, mockingly, beating time vigorously on the back of the violin with the bow.

Suddenly, John hurled himself at her. He tore the violin from her grasp, knocking her down.

"John, you wicked, wicked little boy!" cried Ursula, in horror. She rushed to Muriel. "I was only teasing him," sobbed Muriel, against her breast. "He's so silly—horrid little thing!"

"It's not meant for that," said John, stoutly, holding the violin tightly in both hands. "She's—she's awful. It's not *meant* for that."

"You shall be punished," said Ursula. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"No, don't punish him. Let him alone," said Rudy. He took the violin and put it in its case, snapping down the lid. "He's right. It's not meant for that."

"What nonsense! I shall certainly——"

"Ursula, don't punish him, I say." He turned on her with a flash of his old fire.

As she tramped home, in the late afternoon, over dark gleaming roads—she had refused their offer of the car—she forced herself to think with satisfaction of Ursula's new-found content. It was beautiful to have seen her so thoroughly at ease, functioning so smoothly, so triumphantly content, and yet—and yet—in spite of herself, she couldn't help feeling that there was something a little ghoulish in Ursula's happiness.

It was with relief that she opened her own door. She felt unaccountably tired. On the hall table she found a letter from Brenda, addressed in her careless, sprawling hand.

DARLING MATTIE:

It's a silly old world. Did you know that? I am writing, not to give you the above information, though you very much need it, but to tell you that I am going away—to sail "multitudinous seas, incarnadine," the incarnadiner the better!

Mattie, you ought to see me dance! I'm a wonder at it, honestly. I dye myself all over with brown paint, put on a few bracelets and a scrap of gold cloth, and then I go it, just smash things! They rose and cheered me the other night at the Plaza. It was a benefit performance and I benefited them, I assure you! Remember all that brown paint if you feel that you wouldn't approve.

Are you ever going to ask me to your adorable place again? Please do, a long time from now—

"As to some lovely temple, tenantless
Long since, that once was sweet with shivering brass,
Knowing well its altars ruined and the grass
Grown up between the stones, yet from excess
Of grief hard driven, or great—"

Are you familiar with that? Look it up. The rest of it is nice, too.

You will write me a line, won't you, to wish me bon voyage? I like your letters so much, especially the post marks on the envelopes of them!

And Mattie, take care of your heliotrope. Pull up the weeds. Yours as ever, yes, worse luck, the same as ever,

BRENDA.

Everybody's Magazine, November, 1923

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Caution

Boldness May Master Caution and Still Lead A Seaman to the Finding of a Greater Thing than Either

By Albert Richard Wetjen

GRAY snapped, "Yes, I got your cable. So Captain Marks died?"

He was a stocky man, tubby about the waist. His eyes were keen blue. His hair was white about the temples. He leaned forward now in his swivel chair and glared across at the mate of the *Sea King*, which had just docked.

The mate was a taller man, leaner than the shipowner. He was grayer and more bent. His blue eyes held a peering expression due to long years of gazing over sun-dazzled water and staring into hurricane nights. He was dressed in his blue serge uniform with gold-braided cuffs and with the badge of the Gray Line in the center of his cap, above the peak. The cap he twisted nervously in his hands as he faced his employer.

"That's right, sir," he said. "But he didn't die in the natural way. A kroo boy knifed him one night in Lagos. There was a row over a boat fare I believe."

"H'm." Gray thought awhile and frowned.

The mate faltered, "I suppose I'll be next in line for—for master, sir?" Gray looked up sharply and grunted.

"Sorry, Ellison, but I've got a master waiting for the *Sea King*."

The mate bit his lip.

He said slowly: "I've been with the Line twenty years now, sir. You've told me every time there was a ship that I'd get the next. When you gave Cap'n Marks the *Sea King* you said I was right in line to succeed him as master."

"I know, I know," Gray spoke testily. He drummed on his desk with the handle of a pen. "But there are other things, Ellison. You wouldn't understand."

The mate straightened. "You've always said that, sir. I'd like to know them."

"Very well." Gray sat upright and braced himself. He did not want to hurt the other's feelings, but if the man insisted, all right. "You and I started together, Ellison," he said. "We went as boys on the barque *Farrolan*." He looked the other in the eyes. "Have you ever thought why it was I came to own my own line while you—you stayed a first mate all these years?"

Ellison's brows wrinkled. He ceased twisting his cap and thought.

"Why, sir, I thought it was luck. You got that money for the salving of the *Homeric*. That started you off."

"True. That was one reason. But there were others. I'll tell you. I took chances. I risked a lot and won a lot. If I'd lost I'd have been smashed. But I didn't.

"You, Ellison, never took a risk. You're known as the most careful sailor out of London. And that's why you've never got your command. Don't you see? A shipping company has to pay dividends. And dividends mean fast voyages. It wouldn't pay to have a captain who wouldn't take a chance occasionally. Captain Marks brought the *Sea King* home from Lagos last trip in exactly four days less than you have this time. Those four days mean a loss to us of a thousand pounds, probably more."

"But, sir——" The mate was dumfounded. "I—that is, you can't grow careless with a ship. Why, you know what'd happen if I took risks?"

"Oh, sure." Gray dropped his eyes and

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gazed steadily at the blotter before him. "If you were a captain and took a risk and lost we'd break you. I'd fire you personally. But all our captains accept that as part of the risk. They make fast voyages. We pay them a bonus for that. And that's how they hold their jobs."

The bewildered mate commenced, "But, sir——" The shipowner raised his hand and stopped him with a gesture.

"I know all this I'm saying is against the marine laws and you won't find it laid down in any book on seamanship. But there it is. If you were a man who wasn't afraid to take a chance I'd have given you a command long ago. It isn't a matter of friendship. It's a matter of business. I'd go smash to-morrow if I were like you. That's all."

"I see, sir."

The mate put on his cap and groped for the door.

"The new master'll be aboard this afternoon," Gray called. "You'll sail as soon as you can get cargo in. The men'll work right through to get you away."

"Yes, sir," said the mate and he stumbled through the outer office like a man in a dream. The stenographers and clerks looked after him and grinned as he passed. The number of times "Cautious" Ellison had applied for his command was common gossip. And those in the office of the Gray Line thought it funny.

The mate stumbled into the street and made his slow way back to the docks where the *Sea King* was loading. His brain was in a whirl. At last he was beginning to understand. It was not that other men had a pull with the owners, not that other men were better seamen, but that other men were willing to risk their lives and careers and honor for fast passages. Other men were willing to take chances with the sea. And of all things the sea was the last to take chances with. The mate knew it. He knew those other captains knew it. Yet they were willing to risk it. And so they had prospered.

He laughed. Since he had been a second mate he had dreamt of his command. He had put off marrying till he should get it. And the girl who had waited for him had died without his gold band on her finger. How many hours had he spent wondering why other men were elevated over his head? And at last he knew. No wonder he was called "Cautious" Ellison and that men laughed when they spoke of him. He had always thought the name a tribute to his careful seamanship. Now he knew better. He stumbled up the gangway of the *Sea King* and went to his cabin. Breathless he sank in a chair. A dull ache squeezed his heart.

From an inside pocket he drew a faded photograph and looked at it long and intently. It was that of the woman who was dead. His lips moved silently. If only he had known years before—if only he had known!

IT WAS scarcely two hours before sailing time when a bareheaded clerk from the office brought a letter aboard the *Sea King*. He delivered it to the mate, who was on the bridge examining the compass. The clerk said, respectfully, "Letter from Mr. Gray, captain."

The mate stiffened and turned from the binnacle. His cold gaze rested on the clerk. He echoed, "Captain?" wonderingly.

The clerk grinned.

"Yes, sir. Cap'n Sorris has been sent away."

The mate seized the letter. He tore it open with fingers that shook a little. It couldn't be true. It was too good to be true. Gray's strong, flourishing handwriting stared up at him:

> Ellison, get a third mate and elevate your officers a step. You will take the *Sea King* this trip. Word received that *Sea Vulture* is stranded on coast of Newfoundland. Her captain and chief officer killed. This necessitates my sending Captain Sorris to take charge as we have no other qualified master in port. I should be glad if you'd remember what I said to you about fast voyages. Do your best. If you show me you can I may reconsider my decision about a permanent appointment. Good luck. GRAY.

The mate frowned. His veins ran fire. He could have shouted. He read the letter again. There was no doubt of it. He was master of the *Sea King*. Of course Gray would send his best captain to take over the *Sea Vulture*. She was the crack ship of the line, four times the size of the *Sea King*. And it was true, he, Ellison, was the only man of the line in port who was experienced enough to take command of the latter ship.

"All right, sir?" inquired the clerk, impatient to go.

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"Eh?" The mate awoke with a start. "Eh? Yes, yes. And tell Mr. Gray I thank him very much."

"Yes, sir."

The clerk turned away and went down the companion to the main deck and the gangway leading to the wharf.

Carrying the open letter the mate went into his cabin and sat down heavily. He looked around and smiled. He had occupied this same room for the whole of the eight years he had been aboard the *Sea King*. In an hour or so he would shift for the first time and occupy the captain's cabin.

He would be master of the *Sea King*. The first and second and the third mate would call him "Sir" to his face and "The old man" behind his back. Even the chief engineer would defer to him. It was true he had been temporary captain during the run home from Lagos, but every one aboard had known it was only temporary. Every one had known that whoever Gray appointed to fill the dead Captain Marks's shoes Ellison would not be the man. And it made a subtle difference in their attitudes.

But this trip he would be captain indeed, by the appointment of the owner. "Cautious" Ellison had obtained his command. He could imagine the laughter and the puzzlement that would run through the seaports and along the water-fronts.

He pulled out the faded photograph of the woman who was dead. He talked to it. Later he called the steward into the cabin and set the man to work packing and shifting his gear to the master's room. Folding the precious letter and placing it in his pocket with the photograph, he then went on deck to make final preparations for putting out to sea.

THE night gale blew cold and strong from out of the northwest. On occasion the fine rain that drove with the wind turned to hail and fiercely pricked the skin of any man who faced it. The sky was black with sullen clouds that raced across the face of the pale moon, allowing it to peep forth only on rare occasions. Worst of all was the sea.

It ran high and black, with tortured foam where the overhanging crests broke and the wind tore them off into spume. Hounded by the gale it went south and east in endless heavings until it broke in ruin on the rock-rimmed shores of the Bay of Biscay.

The *Sea King* wallowed mightily. Her holds were heavy with produce from the Gold Coast. Her very decks were cluttered with cargo. Double lashings held the latter against the light seas that occasionally broke aboard, too light to do much damage, for the ship was head to wind and weather and her blunt freighter bows see-sawed up and down with the swell.

Her lean, "cigarette" smokestack and her two lean masts curved great arcs under the sky. When the watery moon did peer out from the flying scud it shone with a sickly light on wet decks, dripping deck houses, and slatting drenched rigging.

Full in the center of the bridge stood Grant Ellison, master of the craft. In the bridge wing to his right, the starboard wing, stood the chief mate. In the bridge wing to his left stood an able seaman. Behind him, some dozen or more paces behind, the helmsman inside his little glass-windowed house spun the uneasy wheel and peered into the uneasy glowing binnacle.

From the chart house windows, behind the wheelhouse, shone the dim light of a swaying oil lamp. Each side of the bridge, beyond the beam rail, came the glow of the electric navigation lights, red to port, green to starboard, reflected back from the wall of darkness. At the foremast glimmered a white light. In the crow's-nest a lookout nodded and peered into the blackness of the gale. Everything was in order.

The captain was muffled in oilskins, oilskins that shimmered wetly in the occasional moonlight. A dripping sou'wester sheltered his eyes from the weather. The mate and the able seaman in their respective bridge wings were similarly attired. The pulse of the monotonously thumping engine below shook the deck. The thunder of the gale and the scream of the sea obscured all minor sounds, such as the slatting of derrick falls, the water spouting from the scuppers, the creak of the wheel, and the laughter from the bright-lit galley in the midship house where some of the watch on deck were standing by and drinking the cook's coffee.

The captain was frowning. He looked considerably older than he really was. The strain of the voyage was telling on him. The days had passed, since leaving London, in an orgy of haste. Between him and the chief engineer a feud had started. The chief

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wanted to conserve coal. The captain wanted speed. He wanted the voyage to be a record for the *Sea King*.

HASTE had grown to be the keynote of the *Sea King's* journey. Never was a ship unloaded and loaded in such a short time. When the freighter finally plowed into the Bay of Biscay she was two days ahead of the best time the late Captain Marks had ever made.

Elation thrilled Captain Ellison. He was making good. But under his elation the still small voice of caution worried him. He knew he was taking chances no seaman should take. He was violating the habits of a lifetime. And the strain was telling on him. Only his officers knew how much, knew how different he was from the old likable cautious Ellison, knew how irritable he had grown.

The mate crossed from the bridge wing. He too looked worried.

"We ought to be nearing Ushant," he shouted in the captain's ear.

The captain made a motion of assent but did not answer. The mate continued after a while.

"We're running close."

The captain answered, "Yes," in a low voice, but said nothing further.

The mate frowned and shook his head and moved across to the bridge wing again.

To himself he muttered moodily, "We'll never see th' light in this smother."

The *Sea King* plowed on. The voice of the gale rose and the seas grew bigger. Abruptly from the darkness ahead shone three lights, a red and a green and a white. The captain, mate and the able seaman sprang to life.

"Ship dead ahead, sir!" came the scream from the crow's-nest.

Shouted the able seaman in the bridge wing: "Ahead, sir! Look out!"

The mate sprang for the telegraph and waited, his hand on the lever.

The captain swung round, his face working.

"Hard a-port!" he roared.

The man in the wheelhouse spun the wheel with frantic energy. Against the force of the storm the *Sea King* was slow in answering her helm. But when she started to come around she came quickly. The other ship was also putting her helm over. The two vessels swung clear, slid past and vanished from each other's sight. The stranger was a long craft, well-lit.

"Cape Mail boat by the look of her," called the mate, letting go the telegraph handle. The captain wiped the perspiration from his brow and nodded.

"Get on your course again," he shouted. The helmsman brought the wheel back. The mate returned with a grunt to his post in the bridge wing. The able seaman resumed his peering out on the beam and ahead. The captain faced for'ard again. The noise of the wind and sea took up the tale. From the galley the laughter still came, for those within knew nothing of the narrow escape.

The captain moved uneasily for a long time. His old cautious streak was awake again as he thought how near the *Sea King* had come to disaster. He muttered to himself. His heart seemed to contract and expand painfully. It was so dark ahead, the glimpses of the moon were so rare. It was such a wild night. The *Sea King* was heavily loaded. The gale was increasing. And yet—"remember what I said about fast voyages," Gray had written. The *Sea King* was going at full speed. And she must go on so. Abruptly the captain turned on his heel and made for the chart room.

Once inside he closed the door and turned the oil lamp a little higher. The noise of the storm was muffled within the room and a pleasant heat came from the steam pipes, a relief after the bitterness of the deck.

From a shelf the captain took down "Brown's Nautical Almanac." What he wanted to look up he knew already by heart. How often in his old cautious days had he not conned the whole list of warnings to mariners who sailed regularly on the United Kingdom to West Coast run?

But he knew a morbid desire to look up that particular passage again. He could no more help it than he could help breathing. He knew he would feel sick when he read. He knew it would increase his worrying. And yet he had to read. He thumbed the thin pages, till he found it:

Caution . . . . Steam vessels approaching the English Channel from the southward are often glad to make Ushant for the purpose of ascertaining their exact position before shaping a course up channel; otherwise there is no reason to pass close round this island commensurate with the dangers which may attend

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the attempt. The gain in distance by steering from off Cape Villano to a point 10 miles west of Ushant, instead of forty miles west is, if intending to make the Start, only five miles . . . . in a distance of 530. . . . . Vessels approaching Ushant should be on their guard against the danger of being set eastward of their reckoning and must exercise the greatest caution in rounding it . . . . Rocks are numerous . . . . the island is surrounded by dangers in all directions . . . . the tide streams are strong, and the extent of their influence seaward undetermined. . . . .

He read no more. With something like a groan he closed the book and replaced it on the shelf. He stood for a long time with his hands resting on the chart bench and his head hanging. Little water drops from his sou'wester spotted the white chart.

The *Sea King* was on a course that would make the short cut and the dangerous cut round Ushant. It would save just five miles in over five hundred. Save perhaps an hour. But he, Captain Ellison, had been saving hours and half hours all the voyage. That was how he came to be now two days ahead of the regular schedule. It was merely one of the risks that captains, according to Gray, had to take if they wished to prosper.

And yet, and yet, he knew it wasn't right. And he knew Gray knew it wasn't right. But there it was. It was business. Not that the sea cared. Business or no business, sooner or later the sea would wreak its anger on the man who risked too often.

It did no good to brood though. Gray had said a fast voyage would determine him in choosing a captain for a permanent command. And he so much wanted that command. He had so long dreamed of it, worked for it, sacrificed for it. Because of it he had put by dreams of marriage and home, and of children to greet him from voyages afar. The fulfilment was going to come late, if it came at all. But it was going to be fulfilment nevertheless.

He sighed. The anxiety of the mate was because that officer knew the risk of short-cutting round Ushant. And the mate was not working for anything. A short voyage meant nothing to him. He was young anyway and could wait for his command. And he was not afraid, therefore, to show his worry. The captain set his jaw.

He was a fool to brood so. Of course everything would be all right. Didn't captains of the Gray Line take risks all the time? Hadn't other men taken the short cut round Ushant and lived through it? He was merely over-nervous because of what he had at stake. He laughed, flung back his shoulders and went out on the bitter deck. All that was necessary was to keep a good lookout for the light.

But under his skin the still small voice was calling again. He remembered unwillingly, and though he struggled against remembering, that the next sentence after those he had read in "Brown's Almanac" said: ". . . no dependence can be placed on seeing the powerful lights, or on hearing the fog-signals. . . . "

"You blasted fool!" he swore aloud and strode savagely to the for'ard dodger.

The mate stood by him, protesting a little angrily.

"Weather's pretty bad to risk it, sir. We'd better alter th' course a bit and make——"

The captain snarled, "Shut up, damn you!" in a tone so utterly unlike his own that the mate fell back astonished and went muttering to the bridge wing again. It occurred to him that command had gone to Ellison's head.

THE mate hardly reached his post when disaster came. It approached without warning, without the slightest warning. Even the man in the crow's-nest received no sign to tell him of what was coming.

The *Sea King* rose on the breast of a wave and sank down. Half-way she jarred, checked, then rose again, briefly, and smashed down on something hard and unyielding. The sea poured over her decks. The cargo she carried there was hurled about in ruin. Ropes broke. From the galley came a sound of screaming. A man had been flung on the red hot stove.

"Astern!" screamed the mate. He flung himself across the bridge and jammed down the telegraph. The helmsman's face showed white, wide-eyed, open-mouthed in the binnacle glow. He forgot to look on the compass card. He forgot to turn the wheel. Fear gripped him.

The able seaman in the bridge wing rocked inboard, trembling.

"Rocks!" he shouted. "My Gawd! Rocks!"

The *Sea King* slid back, veered to one side and wallowed in the trough. She listed slightly to port. She commenced to sink with astonishing rapidity.

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"Rockets!" shouted the mate. He felt the deck lurch under him and swore. The able seaman from the bridge wing raced for the chart-room and broke open a rocket box. Up the companion from the streaming main deck raced an oily-faced, bloody-handed engineer.

"All gone, sir!" he yelled. "We're flooded below! No time to draw fires even. There's a hole in her as big as a church door. Look out when the boilers go. My hand's finished! Don't touch it! Smashed in the fiddley door!"

He was gone, racing for his cabin to get into some warm clothes. The electric lights went out, abruptly. The light from the oil lamp in the chart house still shone. The binnacle still glowed.

The mate's whistle shrilled out above the gale. He shouted:

"Man the boats! Wireless! Where the hell are you? S. O. S. Send it out. You, at the wheel there! Get hold of the operator."

The helmsman came to sudden life and darted away. The darkness seemed to grow denser.

The mate raced across to the captain.

"What you going to do, sir? Abandon ship? She's sinking fast."

All this time the captain had not moved. Like a man paralyzed, his cold hands gripping the rail, he stared unseeing into the driving rain ahead. His heart, after one convulsive leap, had gone dead. His backbone was ice. In the pit of his stomach he was conscious of a sick feeling.

It had come. Just as he had known, it had come. It was never meant that he should be a ship captain. The photograph of the woman who was dead burned in his breast pocket against his side. Why had he waited for what never could be?

"Cautious" Ellison, the joke of the waterfronts, the joke of the Gray Line. Cautious! He who had spent a lifetime being that had lost his first ship through recklessness. To save five miles in five hundred or more.

Dividends were more important than careers and lives. More important than ships even. And the captain who would not take a risk on occasion, on all occasions it seemed, to help those dividends, was no good to his owners. It was not the Gray Line alone. There was scarcely a line in the whole world that did not harass its captains to death. Ninety-five per cent of the wrecks were caused through efforts to make time.

A master was between two fires, once he had achieved his command. If he made slow but safe voyages his owners broke him. If he made fast ones and recklessness could be proved against him, the underwriters broke him. If he made a mistake both broke him, separately and together. It wasn't fair.

"SIR? What's the matter with you, sir! Wake up! She's not long to live!"

The mate was shouting frantically. He shook the captain's arm and forced his face around.

"Shall we abandon ship?" he demanded again.

From the after end of the bridge the able seaman was burning red flares that the mocking wind and rain scattered in a shower of sparks to leeward. From the forerigging some one was sending off star rockets. As in a dream the captain was aware of all this. He was aware that men were running about the bridge, brushing by him, running about the fiddley boat deck. He heard boat falls creaking now and then.

"Eh?" he said. "Eh?"

"Abandon ship!"the mate yelled desperately. "Wake up, sir. Give me orders!"

The captain mumbled dazedly. "Oh, yes. Abandon ship." The mate sprang from him and yelled the command. The coal-blackened firemen poured out the fiddley and went up to the boats. The seamen and firemen from the fo'c's'le came running along the foredeck, half-dressed, dodging seas. Several were swept overboard. In the darkness no one knew who.

It wasn't fair to the common seamen, the captain thought dully. He was facing for'ard again, gripping the rail. He felt the deck tilt under him. A shouting arose.

His first command. His last! He laughed. In the darkness before his eyes he saw the picture of the girl, she who had died without his golden band on her finger. He saw the picture of Gray, the Gray he had sailed with in his youth, before the other had forgotten he was a sailor and a man and the struggle for dividends had rotted him.

What did it matter now? "Cautious" Ellison was smashed! If he were saved Gray and the underwriters would break him.

Everybody's Magazine, November, 1923

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He could imagine Gray's sneer: "I told you so. You can't even take risks and get away with them." No! Gray would never say that to him! Instead, sailors would say: "Ellison? Why, yes, I knew him. He went down with his ship off Ushant."

"Last boat, sir!" the mate was shouting. His arm gripped the captain's and dragged him to the companion.

"Last boat, sir! The rest are away. Come along!"

The captain shook himself clear. He felt angry. As though he would not follow tradition. Was he any the less a sailor than shipmates he had known? Especially when it was his fault the *Sea King* wallowed a stricken sinking thing in the wild sea.

"Go on!" he shouted. "Go on. I'll stay here!"

"Don't be a fool, sir!" The mate was nervous, for the sea was already over the foredeck. Only the bridge and the deck aft of the bridge were above water still. "Don't be a fool, sir. You've done all you can!"

The captain pushed his mate savagely. "Go on! You've a command yet to come. Go on!" The mate started for the companion.

"What shall I say?" he shouted back, one hand on the rail.

"What do I care? Get out! Damn you and damn Gray! This is my ship!"

With an oath the mate jumped the full flight of the companion as he felt the *Sea King* slipping beneath him. He raced for the rail, the main-deck rail, and scrambled over into the waiting boat.

"Give way!" he screamed. "She's going. Get clear before the explosion comes. The old man's crazy!"

Oars dug into the chaotic sea. The boat tossed into the darkness.

On the bridge Captain Ellison stood with feet apart. His hands gripped the rail before him. His shining eyes peered steadfastly ahead to where the light of Ushant flickered and shone faintly through the rain, seen too late to be of service.

"She's my ship!" he insisted savagely. "My ship!"

Dimly behind him he heard the boilers go up with a roar. A gleam of the moon shone on the water below him. Débris flew about him. He felt the wind. The water lapped his knees, then his waist. The gale thundered in his ears. He did not move. There was a swirling on the surface that lasted for a long time after the *Sea King* had disappeared.

What is it that puts in one man the lust to kill? in another an apparently deep-rooted respect for human life? Or are all of us born killers and some learn better?

Everybody's December Novel

The Empty House

By Edwina Levin MacDonald

Does not answer these questions, but it raises them, and it is a story that you won't lay aside until you have finished it.

And besides eight short stories (see page 102) there will be instalments of three serials:

John T. McIntyre's Gripping Border Romance
Mrs. Wilson Woodrow's Story of Love and Intrigue
Francis Lynde's Novel of a Strange Regeneration

December *EVERYBODY'S*—out Nov. 15th

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A Romance of Maximilian's Mexico

Kildare of the Border

Europe Sets Up a Puppet Emperor on Maximilian's Throne—but in Texas Blue-Clad Soldiers Watch—and Tom Kildare Rides South

By John T. McIntyre

Author of "Blowing Weather"

Illustrations by Charles Hargens

Begin this serial with any instalment. The story is here up to this issue.

TOWARD ESPIRITO SANTO, outpost on the border between Texas and Mexico, rode three men. Tom Kildare, sometime wagon boss on the Santa Fe trail, more recently and, for that matter, still of the United States army, was one. Another was fat Pedro Marquez, known to Santa Fe of old—and now in the service of Simon Prentiss, merchant of the border, contracted, just now, to feed the army that maintained Maximilian, by the grace of Louis Napoleon, Emperor of the French, upon his precarious Mexican throne. The third of the travelers was Taos, stoop-shouldered, taciturn, a stranger to Kildare.

Kildare creased his brows in an anxious frown. He knew what lay ahead of them at Espirito Santo. There Maximilian's agents, French and Austrian and Belgian mercenaries, fit men to uphold Napoleon's debt-collecting defiance of the United States when it was torn by civil war, came—bent upon recruiting among the remnants of Kirby Smith's scattered but unbeaten Confederate army of Texas.

He had met Marquez and Taos on the trail. And their business, it seemed to him, bade fair to become his. For they were to meet, at Espirito Santo of all places upon earth, Simon Prentiss's nephew and niece on their way to join their uncle in the City of Mexico. The nephew might meet with no harm in such a place—but a girl! And Kildare remembered her as he had seen her last, before the war, at St. Joe—a lovely child.

IN LESS than a half hour the three arrived at an enclosure surrounded by a crumbling wall. A gateway, to which there was no gate, gave them admittance; and in a few moments they were among the trees, the old mission building, its small windows winking with light, before them.

Espirito Santo was one of the great chain of combined forts and missions built many years before when Spain held not only Mexico and California, but Texas as well. It was by means of such establishments that Spain pushed its civilization farther and farther into the wilds. It had been abandoned long since by the holy fathers; and the town which had sprung up around it, had, during the war, become a halting place for adventurers, a rendezvous for cut-throats who had to cling close to the border, a forgathering place for many broken and desperate men whom the years

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of strife in the United States and Mexico had left in their wake.

"The town seems quiet and sleepy," said Taos, in a low tone. "But the mission's lively enough to suit anybody."

Through the lighted windows came the scraping of fiddles and the monotonous beat of an untuned piano; boisterous talk and snatches of song in foreign tongues were also heard.

"French, Austrians, Belgians," murmured Pedro Marquez. "And with Mexicans on top of all to make it worse. Santa Sebastian open a way for me, for I'll be in sad danger from these ruffians."

The fat Spaniard and Taos rode on toward the mission building. But Kildare dismounted in the shadow and hitched his horse to a tree.

"Now, Pepper, *agra*," he said to his horse, "stop here quietly, till I come back. Maybe it's a hurry I'll be in when you see me again. So be ready to bolt, old chap, as soon as I hit the saddle."

He made his way toward a window. Inside, the mission was fitted up after the usual fashion of the border saloons of the Southwest; throngs gathered at the bar, at the tables others drank, or gambled upon the turn of the card. Most of them were drunk, all were noisy and their gestures were those of men who at any moment might throw off all restraint and turn the place into a battle-ground.

"A NICE lot," muttered Kildare. "Sure, any of them would hold a man's life at no higher value than I would a lizard's."

But as his quick eyes roved about, Kildare was soon aware that all in the place were not of the wild border type. At a table on the far side was an unusual group; each man was heavily armed and they carried themselves with the high-headed military air common to the armies of Europe.

"So," said Kildare, interestedly. "There we have the men from across the river!"

With quiet steps he made his way round the old building. Gaining an open window near to the table occupied by the group, he stood in the shadow of the trees. None of the foreigners was in uniform; all wore the usual dress of the border country, but otherwise they made no attempt at disguise. One of them with the waxed mustache and pointed imperial of the French army spoke to a dark man opposite him.

"Here would be fine material for soldiers," said he, in indifferent Spanish. "What a pity the Emperor has changed his mind about recruiting Americans!"

"Fellows like these would bring nothing but trouble. He's better without them," said the dark-skinned man. "As long as the government at Washington merely protested in words it made little difference what we did. But sending Sheridan's army is another matter."

The Frenchman, a hard-featured man, gestured contemptuously.

"What is Sheridan but the leader of a mob?" he said.

The dark man smiled a slow smile, showing his white, even teeth.

"THINK as you please on that point, Duroc," he said. "But you can awaken no interest in me in such matters. I am here for something else, as you know."

Duroc, and the others laughed.

"You have gone to a good deal of trouble to get the guides of these travelers tipsy, and so compel the party to remain here overnight," said the Frenchman. "I hope the girl is beautiful, Rayon."

Vicente Rayon smiled and drained a glass of brandy.

"What I know I keep to myself," he said. "That she is here is enough. And she is worth any amount of trouble."

Near where Kildare stood among the trees was the entrance to the mission; and when the door opened, a broad trail of light shot out, bringing him into full view.

"Divil take it!" he grumbled, after he had been forced to shrink back several times to avoid this sudden glare. "Why don't them that's in keep to their sup of drink, and them that's out, go quietly home? Faith, between them, they keep me dodging up and down like a jack-in-a-box."

But now, from a point near by, came a different occasion for care. It was the sound of stamping horses, and then the whispering of low-pitched voices. Kildare could not hear what was being said; but one of the voices was that of a girl, and there was something in it, indistinct as it was, which caused him to bend nearer in the desire to hear more of it. But just then the door again swung open; the broad trail

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of light flooded among the trees and he shrank back into the shadows. However, as he did so, he caught a glimpse of the girl, slim, with great, fear-filled eyes and masses of dark hair. Her hands were clasped, her whole attitude was pleading. Kildare drew in his breath sharply as he gazed at her, so like a spirit was she in the shaft of radiance; and then with a snap the door closed, and darkness came again.

"It is she!" the Celt, almost in awe, whispered to himself. "It is she again, and as wonderful as a vision."

Gently he moved forward toward the place where he had seen the girl standing; then he heard a complaining voice—that of fat Pedro Marquez.

"*Madre de Dios!*" said the Spaniard, chokingly. "Why did you stop here? Such a thing to do, señorita. And now your brother will bring trouble upon us, I know. Why could he not be content to slip away and say nothing? Why must he go into that den of wolves and defy them? It's madness!"

"He is headstrong, Pedro. And when he is angry he'll stop at nothing."

It was the girl's voice, the same whose indistinct tones Kildare had caught a moment or so before; and in it was the thrill of fear.

"It was foolhardy," Pedro Marquez continued. "I know he dislikes Colonel Rayon. But he should consider you, his sister, señorita. He should give thought to your danger."

DANGER! Kildare standing in the darkness, suddenly stiffened. He pictured the swaggering troopers, the Mexican with his slow smile and insolent eyes; again he saw the girl as he had seen her in the beam of light, and fear was in her pleading face. The darkness turned red to Kildare, and he found his hand gripping the butt of his forty-five. Back he turned to the window through which he had been looking. The scene had changed; a boyish young fellow stood at the table occupied by Rayon, Duroc, and their friends; he was rather pale, but he looked Rayon in the face, and his manner was of one striving to control a frantic anger.

"I know you can answer smoothly enough when you want to, Colonel Rayon," the youth was saying. "But in this case I think you lie! Your being here does not look like a chance; the whole thing seems deliberately planned; and if I were sure of it, you'd answer here and now."

The cold, dark face of the Mexican was lifted toward the speaker; the white teeth were showing, the insolent eyes were glittering evilly. At once Kildare left the window. He was no longer careful; his booted feet crushed unheedingly through the brush as he made for the entrance.

"Pedro Marquez!" said he, pausing at the place where he had heard the fat Spaniard's voice only a few moments before. "Friend Pedro, where are you?"

There was a wheeze from the darkness; then the fat man's voice was heard.

"Señor! Is it you?"

"It is divil an else, friend Pedro," replied Kildare. "I heard horses here a bit ago. Are they yours?"

"They are, señor."

"Mount, then, and be ready. I'm going inside. When the young man comes out, away with you all, like the wind."

"Yes, señor," replied the Spaniard, fervently. "I will gladly do as you say."

THE hand of Kildare was upon the door when he felt a touch upon his arm. The light was too dim to see by, but for all that he knew that the girl stood by his side.

"Is there danger?" she asked. Her voice was low-pitched and still held the thrill of fear.

"There may be," he said. "One can never tell."

"Are you going into this place because my brother is there? Because these men are evil and not his friends?"

"Yes."

"He is known to you? I did not know he had—a friend—like you——"

"I never saw him before."

The wonder grew in her voice; and in the wonder was admiration.

"You are brave!" she said. "You are generous. I pray no harm befalls you."

With something beating in his blood which was strange and delightful, Kildare pushed open the saloon door and went in. The babble of the place filled his ears; the fiddles squalled, the piano beat monotonously. But he paid no heed. Quietly he made his way toward the bar, at a point

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"Look out!" But Kildare's own gun spoke instantly, once, twice, thrice.

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within earshot of the party from across the Rio Grande. Rayon was speaking to the American youth; and though his eyes were fixed and threatening, his smile still showed his white teeth.

"A straightforward opinion, put bluntly forward, is always refreshing," Rayon was saying. "But for all that"—and the smile upon the speaker's face grew more pronounced—"one must be in a humor to appreciate them. Sometimes it happens——"

But here the youth interrupted him.

"Your ideas of this, or of anything else, señor," said he, angrily, "have no interest for me. I didn't come here to listen to you, but to have you listen to me. I have told you that I believe you to be a scoundrel; let me add to that that I *know* you to be a trickster, and I take my leave of you, hoping that we'll never meet again."

He was turning away when the Mexican arose.

"One moment," spoke Rayon. "You have finished with me, you say; but you overlook the possibility that I may not have finished with you."

The young man paused, and looked at the other.

"Well?"

"Do you propose to return to St. Louis?"

"I do."

"Taking your sister with you?"

"Can you doubt it?"

"You forget, I think, that your uncle gave me certain authority, should I chance to meet you."

"SHE goes back with me to St. Louis." The boy stared the Mexican in the face, steadily. "I know now what I should have suspected before—that my uncle is too much of a rat to be trusted. I must have been mad to consent to take her to Mexico and leave her in his care."

"He is her guardian."

"Then let him come and claim her. I have told you, Colonel Rayon, that I suspect the whole crew of you; and my sister shall not go one step further toward the border."

Again he turned away, but the Mexican's hand closed upon his shoulder. The youth was slim but possessed of wiry strength; he whirled and struck the man in the face. With a snarl, Rayon shifted his grip to the throat; and his companions leaped to their feet.

"Squeeze the breath out of him!" cried Duroc.

The youthful American broke the Mexican's hold and stepped back. Like a flash, a pistol appeared in Rayon's hand; his eye, as cold and merciless as a copperhead's, looked along the barrel. But Kildare at the right instant deftly touched his elbow. The weapon sounded, and the bullet smashed through a window. The fiddles squealed shrilly and stopped; the startled performer at the piano allowed his hands to fall with a crash upon the keyboard; the roar of voices ceased and every eye in the Mission turned upon the little group of which Kildare was now the center.

"As you are," spoke Kildare, his heavy Colt in his grip and his keen eyes taking in every movement of the others.

THE cold glance of Rayon swept him, and the white teeth showed in a slow smile.

"You have taken a liberty, señor," said the Mexican, evenly.

"Sure, don't let that annoy you," replied Kildare. "I would have taken it, no matter what the name of it." Then with a nod of his head to the youthful American: "Get on with you, me young bucko; there are some friends of yours awaiting you at the door."

The young man began a protest against leaving a friend in such a situation; but Kildare cut him short.

"Faith, here I stand with a gun in my fist, and never a doubt in my mind. So, don't bother about me; be off with you."

As the youth started toward the door there was a quick movement among the foreigners.

"As you are!" Kildare's voice grated harshly, and the Colt grinned in the faces of the others. "I don't want to weaken Marshal Bazaine's forces any; but I'll show you some gun-play if you move a hand."

Ten feet along the bar stood a drunken half-breed, a cigarette dangling pendulously from his lips. Kildare's back was to him, so he could not see that he had slipped a pistol from his sash. The half-breed, a grin upon his face, raised the weapon until the muzzle was pointed between Kildare's

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shoulders; then the heavy report of a rifle rang out; the man dropped upon his face, and the voice of the stoop-shouldered Taos came from an open window.

"Look out!"

But Kildare had already caught the flash of the mission lights upon lifting weapons; his own gun spoke instantly, once, twice, thrice; in the rush of by-standers for safety the lights were overthrown; in the darkness he slipped through the door. Gaining the trees he heard the voice of Taos:

"Sharp work, stranger!"

"It had the fine promise as a ruction, so it had," said the Celt. "And sorry I was to move out of it." He searched the darkness with his eyes. "But I thought someone out here might need looking after."

"The girl is gone," said the old hunter. "Pedro Marquez got her started toward the river right after you spoke to her."

"For the river!" Kildare was silent for a moment. "And what of her brother?"

"I spoke to him when he came out; and as soon as I told him they'd gone, he jumped on his nag and galloped after them."

THE ringing notes of a bugle floated above Fort Brown; the June sun beat down upon the long, blue lines of infantry and glanced gleamingly upon the rifle barrels. The Stars and Stripes blew out from the tall flagstaff; across the river the Mexican town of Matamoras could be seen through a haze.

Tom Kildare drew rein on Pepper, and wiped the moisture from his face.

"Faith, these river valleys are the divil," complained he. "It's fairly melting I am with the heat."

His glance went to the lines of infantry stretching out in precise order; and he nodded approvingly.

"It's not Sheridan's own lads," said he, "but they look fine, hardy fighting men for all that. If they are ever sent across the river there'll be an illigant ruction, entirely."

Arriving at the fort, Kildare saw to it that Pepper was rubbed, watered, and afterward had a feed of corn; then attended to his own needs and made his way to headquarters. A group of officers stood about the door, and from the air which hung about the place it was evident that something of importance was going on within.

"General Sheridan is very busy just now," a sprucely uniformed young infantry officer informed Kildare. "You'll have to try again."

"I think the general will see me," said Kildare.

The youth, who was plainly fresh to the service, regarded the speaker with much superiority.

"The general is seeing no one this morning except persons concerned in some matters under discussion," maintained he, with the air of a general of division.

"Be so kind as to say to him that Kildare, of his old command, is here."

"It's really no use——" said the other, easily; but this time Kildare interrupted him.

"It's now ten o'clock," said he in a cold voice, "and ten o'clock was the hour at which I was to see the general. Will you have my name taken in, or shall I go to someone else?"

"Oh, you had an appointment?" Here the youthful functionary opened his eyes. "That is different." He went inside, and in a moment reappeared. "The general will see you. Please step in."

Kildare went in. In a wide room were a number of officers at tables, busy with heaps of documents. At a window sat Sheridan, a short, powerful man, with a big, round head, an eagle nose and a huge mustache and imperial. About him was a group of stern, bearded men who had gone through the campaigns of the Civil War, and who now stood ready to marshal their men in a conflict which might prove even more momentous and dreadful.

Sheridan looked up as Kildare entered. He nodded rather curtly, but there was a pleased look in his eye. He continued what he was saying to an officer who stood near.

"I agree with Secretary Stanton and with General Grant," he said. "They saw into the heart of the thing at one glance. The occupation of Mexico by certain of the powers of Europe has not only been an encouragement to our southern states to continue the rebellion, but an actual part of it. And I also agree with them that secession will never be entirely put down until the European fighting men take to their ships and sail away."

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The officer to whom Sheridan spoke was a man past middle age, war-worn, and with a firm jaw.

"EUROPE expected the Union to break up," he said. "And they openly affronted our government when they threw their battalions across the Atlantic into Vera Cruz. They hoped for and expected the success of the rebellion; for the establishment of the Confederacy would have put a buffer state between them and the Union's anger."

A huge brigadier who sat near Sheridan laughed.

"It was a good plan," he said, "a far-reaching plan; and no man can tell what its limits were. But, it depended upon the outcome of things over which they had no control. And as those things have failed, Maximilian sits rather shakily on his throne and his supporters are plainly showing their annoyance at our being here. And the presence of the five thousand cavalry we have at Austin, and the five thousand mixed troops that lie at San Antonio, does not add anything to their enjoyment and comfort."

"I have no personal hatred of Maximilian," said the gray-haired colonel, "for I understand he is a mild, well-meaning man—a sort of puppet in this affair—a glorified pawn in the game of international chess; and what he says or does means very little. That close-mouthed adventurer at Versailles, Napoleon III, is the person to be looked to. As the situation stands, everything depends upon his state of mind."

Again the big brigadier laughed.

"I suppose it's to influence that state of mind that we are here," said he. "And from the increased attention we are getting from him, I rather think the plan has worked."

SHERIDAN, during this, had sat turning over paper after paper. Now he looked up.

"As you say, Colonel Knox," said he to the gray-haired officer, "the background of the entire matter is the French Emperor. Apparently it all depends upon him whether or no we are to cross the river in force, or remain here and use persuasion. However, the State Department will deal with him—and we will deal with Maximilian. The most immediate thing for our attention, it seems to me, is this"—and he took up one of the papers before him. "It's a demand that all the arms, stores, equipment and guns carried across the Rio Grande by those Confederates who refused to surrender be at once returned to United States territory; upon refusal steps will be taken which might have most deplorable consequences."

A murmur of approval went up; and the commander went on:

"It is not only dangerous, but impossible for us to have an organized Confederate Army—for that's really what it is—hovering upon our border. The Imperial Mexican Government must see that this state of affairs is corrected—and at once."

Then Sheridan arose. He beckoned to Kildare to follow and entered an adjoining room.

"Kildare," said Sheridan, "I was glad to get track of you the other day; for of all my old boys, you are the one I'd pick for the service I have on hand."

Kildare saluted.

"I want a man to go to Mexico City," said the general. "It's a matter of urgent importance; a message to be carried—one that might bring about an assurance of continued peace, or what may amount to a declaration of war."

"Yes, sir," said the cavalryman.

"The matter is not what might be called secret service," said Sheridan. "In fact," he smiled, "I want it to be quite the opposite. There should be as much publicity as possible."

"My tongue is to wag all along the way," said Kildare, nodding. "And after I get to Mexico City, there should be divil a one there but should know just why I'm calling."

Sheridan laughed in his grim way.

"Many a weighty communication is received by governments and quietly filed," said he. "The populace never hears of them. We don't desire that. The demands of the United States in this matter must be as widely spread as possible."

"I understand," said Kildare. "Some day, shortly, you may have to cross the river yourself, and you want this to be known as the reason."

"When can you start?" asked the general, briefly.

"I'd like a trifle of sleep for both myself

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and my horse," said Kildare. "We were hard put to it all night."

"Very well. Report to me at sundown, ready to start."

A moment later Kildare was outside headquarters, striding down the street, a smile upon his lips, a feeling of lightness in his breast. Mexico City! Of all the places in the world, that was the one where he most wished to go.

THE bald, aproned landlord of the Hotel Europe stood in his little palm garden and looked across the wide plaza of Mexico City, toward the Cathedral. Deep and full pealed the bell in the tower, and the landlord nodded his shining poll to the swing and clash.

"Do you see the people?" he asked of a patron who sat at a small table, sipping red Spanish wine and smoking a cigarette. "Do you see them swarm to the Cathedral like bees?" He chuckled as he watched the stream of worshipers flowing across the plaza in answer to the bells. "They mean to call upon Heaven to do what the empire has failed to do."

Pedro Marquez put down his glass.

"The empire!" said he. "Pah!"

Pedro, however, expressed his contempt in extremely low tones; and the landlord grinned understandingly.

"With all my heart," replied that worthy. "Pah! by all means. That is all that can be said for a government which has friends only in the army and among the official class."

Pedro Marquez pointed one pudgy forefinger across the plaza.

"Look there for the proof of what you say," agreed he. "Every man of them is sleek and smooth; and all have some privilege which makes them so."

"The empire," said the host, "like most empires, does not care for the poor. And in turn the poor refuse to care for the empire. The Cathedral bells ring, summoning all who love the usurper to pray for his strengthening; but the poor do not respond. See, how they loiter on the plaza! They mean to leave the service to the favored ones."

Pedro Marquez mopped his great fat face and looked wise.

"As you say," spoke he, "the empire does not concern itself much with the people. And that is a grievous mistake. It is my opinion, Pablo, that the first thing a government should see to is that the people are fed. The empire has neglected that most important service: and what has happened? Mexicans usually do not care who controls the state, so long as their bellies are filled; but as this was not done, they opened their eyes to learn the reason. Then, for the first time, you might say, they noticed that an Austrian had come from over the sea to rule them. And they were not pleased."

Pablo polished at the top of a table, endeavoring to rub out the rings left by the bottoms of many glasses.

"The Austrians should be driven out," he said, with incautious loudness.

Pedro Marquez looked all about; then he shook his head disapprovingly.

"Forward, honest speech is a thing to be admired," said he. "I respect directness of opinion. But the inconsiderate expression of it here in Mexico City at this time is not favorable to continued good health."

"That may be true," protested the landlord, "but if no one speaks—if no one does anything—what will the end be? We will always be imposed upon. These European bullies who now infest the city will always be here, shaking their fists under our noses."

"We must bide our time," spoke fat Pedro Marquez, with an air of profound statecraft. "We must be careful, just now, not to make them angry."

"The assassins!" muttered Pablo, indignantly. "To force themselves upon us and then take on the airs of masters."

"JUST a little more patience," said Pedro, confidently. "I was in Texas recently—God save me from another such experience!—and there I had some conversation with an Americano who made me see things quite differently. You see, the Civil War in the United States being over at last, the president of that country has time to turn his eyes upon Mexico and see what has happened here while he was so busily engaged. From what I heard, he is not pleased. And when he speaks—depend upon it—something will happen."

The Cathedral bells had ceased ringing, but the stream of people continued across the plaza. Just then a middle-aged and somewhat overdressed woman emerged

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from the crush with the air of a hen whose plumage has been ruffled.

"Rascals and triflers!" she said. "They have no more manners than burros. A lady cannot trust herself among them."

"Am I mistaken," said the landlord of the Hotel Europe, as he gazed at the irate female, "or is that your wife, Señor Marquez?"

"It is she," said Pedro, forlornly. "And much out of temper, it seems. The crowd has offended her dignity."

He arose to go to his lady, but as it happened, she spied him first, and at once entered the little garden.

"So there you are, Pedro," said she. "Quite at your ease, and with your glass of wine before you. Is it right and proper that you should sit coddling your stomach while I am being mishandled by ruffians?"

Pedro was making answer to this when a number of officers, in French uniform, entered the garden. They were rather undersized in the eyes of those who require soldiers to be stalwart and showy; but they were the sons of those men who had conquered Europe under Bonaparte; their eyes were quick and fierce, their mustaches sharply pointed, and they carried themselves with the true military swagger.

"A few bottles of wine before our prayers," suggested Captain Duroc, who was one of the party. "It will help us to be more devout."

The others laughed; their boots crushed the gravel of the walks, their spurs jingled, their side arms clanked and rattled as they moved toward the array of small tables.

"*Madre de Dios!*" ejaculated Pablo, of the Hotel Europe. "Look what is before me! These French are assassins!" But when he approached the officers he was bowing and polite enough. "What can I serve you, señores?" he asked.

"Wine. And the best in your hotel," said Duroc.

"If it isn't, and if the service isn't quick," cried a swaggering young lieutenant of artillery whose straps were obviously fresh to his shoulders, "I'll cut your ears off at once."

Pablo hurried away to fill the order, and the troopers seated themselves at a table.

"The townspeople fairly flock to the service," said one of them. "I hadn't thought the empire so popular."

"Townspeople always favor what you offer them," said the experienced Duroc, "so long as you keep the bayonet at their throats."

"I wish they would refuse what we ask of them," said a snappy little captain whose nose was like the hooked beak of a vulture and whose mustache and imperial were waxed to spike-like points. "We've never had a proper revenge upon them for the trouble they gave us on our way from Vera Cruz. It would do me good if they'd waver for just a moment—then 'plop'—the point could do its work."

"It's better as it is," said a stout, comfortable-looking infantryman. "Let us have as few difficulties with the citizens as possible. It is their place to pray for the empire, and ours to fight for it. We'll get along much better together if we each stick to our separate tasks."

At this point a party of Austrians entered the garden; they, too, had the aggressive manner and insolent glances of their caste; their side arms clanked against their bootlegs, their spurs jingled against the stones with as much defiance as those of the French. The fierce-looking captain with the vulture beak laughed as he looked at the newcomers.

"HAH! Who ever saw the like of this, comrades! Even the Austrians are on their way to the service. With such miracles happening, the empire should be as safe as Gibraltar."

The ready laugh of the Frenchmen at this saying rang through the little garden. The Austrians scowled, and one huge fellow, a heavy dragoon with a ponderous saber belted at his side, growled to his fellows: "There are things called witty upon the Paris boulevards which are enough to turn one's stomach. And the French take great pride in them."

"They look upon everything as a jest, even the profession of arms," said a tall, gangling Hungarian hussar. "It's a great pity we didn't let them take their medicine on the way from Vera Cruz. If it hadn't been for us, they would now be food for the vultures and not airing their wit in public places."

Now it was the French who felt called upon to scowl; the two parties sat at their separate tables, glowering like so many

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surly cats. The landlord returned just then with the wine for the French; and he viewed the hostile attitudes of his patrons with alarm.

"Here is your drink, señores," said he. "Very good Spanish wine, and very old. It has been in the cellars so long that the spiders had all but covered it."

The corks were being drawn by attendants when there came an increased bustling in the garden. A third party of officers—Belgians, by their uniforms—came stamping in. Pablo's already long face was now a picture of utter woe.

"The French were bad enough, alone," he whispered to Pedro Marquez and his wife. "With the Austrians added, they were too much. But, now"—and he shook his head dolefully—"with these Belgian firebrands piled on top of the other two, only an angel from heaven can avert trouble."

The French looked keen, alert and deadly. The Austrians were huge, Gothic men for the most part, with the harsh manners of those accustomed to being obeyed. The Belgians were a gay, reckless lot and looked to be what Bonaparte had frequently pronounced them—the best soldiers in Europe. And these were fair samples of the three nations which made up the army then holding Mexico in its steel claws, and supporting the recently established empire.

"Are gentlemen not to be permitted to drink their wine in peace?" exclaimed the young French artilleryman, cocking a hostile eye at the other groups.

"Landlord!" roared an Austrian dragoon. "Give us places away from the children. Their chatter is not to be endured. Who are these little boys in the red trousers who drink and smoke and spit?"

"The hulks!" growled the little vulture-nosed Gaul, bristling like a bantam cock. "What a scarcity of men there must be in Vienna when they place uniforms upon such great sides of beef! They are like plow horses!"

"The Hapsburgs were always niggards," spoke a Belgian cavalry captain as he threw his scabbarded saber upon the table before him. "They send a handful of troops to help their archduke to a throne. If it were possible for any nation to be worse than the French, it is the Austrians!"

The attendants of the little Hotel Europe served the grumbling groups with anxious celerity; and as they did so, Señora Marquez proceeded with some complaining upon her own account.

"SUCH a time as I had!" she said. "A properly disposed woman can no longer walk the streets since these rascally foreign soldiers——"

"Hush!" warned the landlord, hastily.

"My dear," added Pedro, under his breath, "have some care. Do you not see that the garden is alive with them?"

"I care nothing for them," said the señora, belligerently. "Here I go quietly about my business when I am caught in a whirlpool of rascals at their rough play. It is a blessing that my clothes were not torn from my back."

"See how they glare at each other," complained Pablo. "In a moment they will be spilling each other's blood."

"What matter, so long as it is not that of some honest person?" said the woman.

As she spoke she looked out across the plaza, a worried look on her face. The crowd had grown even more dense than before. Wide avenues were left open so that those upon their way to the Cathedral could pass through. A body of European troops had been formed in the center of the plaza, as the uncertain temper of the Mexican populace was well known. The ready bayonet was there for emergency; and, if that were not enough, the still more ready bullet.

"Not a sign of her!" said the señora. "Not a glimpse anywhere." Then, in explanation, to her husband: "It is the Señorita Prentiss I mean," she said. "Her uncle sent me with her to the Cathedral, but I became separated from her in the crush. *Madre de Dios!* How angry he will be when he hears of it! He does not permit her to go anywhere alone." Then noticing the concern with which Pablo viewed the menacing looks of his soldier guests, she asked: "Why should you be so full of fear of their fighting?"

"It is not that," sighed the landlord; "they could cut one another's throats, and it would give me nothing but joy. It is for myself and my hotel that I fear. They destroy things like monkeys."

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"THEY are savages," pronounced Señora Marquez. "Do they never agree with each other upon anything?"

"Upon one subject only," said Pablo. "And that is in hating the Americanos."

"But not all Americanos," said the señora, confidently. "Not those from what have been called the Confederate States. Did we not welcome them with great joy when they marched into Mexico some time ago? Were they not expected to be of great assistance to the empire?"

"They are as much hated now, by the Europeans in Mexico, as the Yankees of the north," said Pablo. "The whole face of matters has changed since they first came here; it is now feared that instead of being a help to Maximilian, they will be a source of trouble."

"They will be," affirmed Pedro Marquez. "What with that American army on the far bank of the Rio Grande, they can't help but be so. This *gringo* general, Sheridan, is a demon; he waits only for the word."

Here there came a babble from the officers at the tables.

"Landlord!" cried the French.

"This way, fool!" roared the Austrians.

"Where are you, you stupid jackass!" shouted the Belgians. One of them captured the anxious Pablo. "What! Would you neglect your guests so?"

"Thick head!" cried the big Austrian dragoon, also seizing the landlord. "Here is the way you are to go!"

"Swine! Do you not hear us?" clamored the French. "Be quick!"

"Señores! Señores!" cried the frightened Pablo. Then someone struck a blow; it fell heavily, and an Austrian went down; now there was a whirl of blows and oaths; weapons flashed. A group of brilliantly uniformed officers advancing across the plaza halted; one of them, his breast hung with jeweled orders, came into the little enclosure.

"Stop!" His voice was sharp and commanding and sounded above the uproar. "And, on your lives, put up your weapons!"

THE angry men drew back; sullenly they pushed their pistols into their holsters and thrust their swords back into their sheaths; then they stood silent, saluting, waiting.

Marshal Bazaine—for the interfering officer was no less a personage than the commander-in-chief of the European armies in Mexico—looked at them contemptuously. He was a stout man, above fifty, red-faced, bullet-headed and absolutely unlike the popular picture of a general. Nevertheless he was a man possessed of a great military reputation, and the fame he had gained on the battlefields of the Crimea against the Russians was still undimmed.

"Frenchmen, too!" said the marshal, witheringly, as he surveyed the brawlers. "I had not expected that. Snapping at each other like street curs. What have your orders been, gentlemen—all of you? Have I not said that fighting among you must stop?" Then to one of the officers who accompanied him, he added: "Have their names taken. I'll see to the matter, later."

While the names were being given and written down, Bazaine stepped out upon the plaza; among the group of officers were two young men in riding dress. One was tall and of athletic build, with blue Gothic eyes and the blond hair of the north; the other was the young man, nephew to Simon Prentiss, whom Tom Kildare had seen some nights before at Espirito Santo. Bazaine spoke to the blond man, and there was apology in his tones.

"In spite of my positive orders," said the marshal, "this spirit of hostility goes on. That we are now comrades in a common cause, serving under the same flag, seems to mean nothing to them. The feuds of Europe have been carried into Mexico."

"I have found that old hatreds are not easily forgotten," answered the other. "In Austria we draw both officers and rank and file from the various races making up the empire, but the fact of a common service has never prevented quarreling. But such a condition as you seem to have here must be especially dangerous. The empire, if I may say so, is none too secure; every man in the army should be working and thinking of its proper establishment and of that alone."

"Of course that is true, but then we must not take the matter too seriously; these young sparks only need employment," said the French marshal, with a smile. "Give them stranger throats to cut and they'll forget one another. I am sorry Juarez has grown so disheartened in his

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opposition to us; if he still held the field, we could maintain a certain amount of activity, and that would be good for the higher spirits among us."

The Austrian laughed.

"Well," said he, "failing Juarez's rebels, why not the Americans? Sheridan is lying just across your border, and from what I've heard of his doings, in the war between the states, a little activity would please him greatly."

Bazaine shrugged his thick shoulders.

"I ask for activity, only," he said. "The Americans are another matter, altogether. No"—he held up one hand protestingly—"not the Americans—unless we must."

"But," said the Austrian, and there was an attentiveness in his eye that spoke of more than ordinary interest, "suppose you must!"

Bazaine regarded the speaker fixedly for a moment before he answered.

"That is an event that shall be passed upon by others than myself," he said. "It is my business to carry on wars, not to make them." He looked toward the group of splendidly uniformed officers who formed his staff. "Well, colonel, they are awaiting me and I must leave you. But do not forget—nor you, Mr. Prentiss, that dinner is at seven."

Then, with a wave of the hand, the stout marshal, his glittering officers about him, made his way across the plaza.

THE young American and the blond Colonel Stahlberg sat at one of Pablo's tables with some of his Spanish wine before them; and they talked.

"Marshal Bazaine is a good soldier," said young Prentiss. "But, however great his shrewdness and enterprise against an open foe, I'm afraid he's not the best man to be matched against a hidden one; in the presence of what cannot be readily understood he seems to be at loss."

The Austrian looked at the American with attention.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

Young Prentiss trifled with the stem of his wine glass.

"It has been in my mind for some days to mention this matter to you," he said. "And, I suppose, I'll have no better chance than this. You have just heard what the marshal said. But the real source of the hostility between the various bodies of troops under him has escaped him. He thinks it is a matter of nationality; he believes it to be the embers of ancient grudges." The speaker shook his head. "It is not an old hatred, newly sprung up; this dissension among the officers of his army has been carefully planned—encouraged—brought about."

The Austrian's blue eyes opened wide.

"Planned!" said he. "Brought about! Who would do such a thing? And for what purpose?"

Upon the steps of the Cathedral stood a group of officers; upon the edge of this, in the gorgeous garb of a Mexican colonel, stood a man with insolent eyes and a slow, mocking smile.

"That man!" said the young American. "Vicente Rayon!"

Stahlberg laughed; he leaned back in his chair and looked at his friend, amusedly.

"Well, it's plain enough you don't like Rayon!" he said. "Ah, well, I don't care much for him, myself."

"IF YOU are wise, you'll hold to that," said young Prentiss. "For the man who distrusts another will never be his victim."

"Victim," said the big Austrian. His blue eyes suddenly narrowed; all his amusement was gone.

Young Stuart Prentiss studied the bold face of the European—a soldier's face, firm, strong, full of courage; and yet a face that was not without softness.

"In your own country," said the young American, "you belong to a great house. When a mission is to be undertaken, in the service of the state, a member of one of the representative houses is usually chosen to carry it out. Am I right?" Stahlberg nodded, and the young American went on. "I know you were with the army of Grant in some of the last battles of the Civil War as a representative of your government; afterwards I know you were directed to come here to Mexico City. And while I do not know the reason for this, I can guess. The new Mexican Emperor, Maximilian, made an urgent appeal recently to his brother, Franz Josef, of Austria, for troops and money to support the French in the event of an open break with the United States: more than likely you are here to

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observe the facts, and judge if such an adventure has any hope of success."

"Well?" said the blond Austrian, and he regarded the other attentively.

"Since coming to Mexico some time ago on my uncle's business," resumed young Prentiss, "I have mingled with some unusual people; and I have heard some surprising things."

"What have you heard?" asked Stahlberg.

"There has been nothing very definite. But, then, constant rumors usually have some base." Here the young man's voice dropped; he went on, guardedly. "Rayon has made much talk. He aims high; he hopes eventually to be placed at the head of the empire's affairs; he hopes to have Bazaine recalled, then to take command of the French force that's here, and the greatly increased Austrian force he hopes to obtain."

"And then?" asked the Austrian.

"IT IS his purpose to reclaim all the American territory that was once dominated by Mexico, by France and Spain: to grip the trade with South America, to dictate the policy of the Pacific."

For a moment Stahlberg was silent; he frowned at his wine glass, and his strong fingers drummed upon the edge of the table.

"This is all new to me," he said at last. "And my mission has been a secret one. I do not understand how its nature leaked out. I have mentioned it to no one except Maximilian himself."

"Then Rayon was sure to learn of it. You told the Emperor—the Emperor told his adviser, Cortizar—and Cortizar told the beautiful Frenchwoman, Theresa Reuchard, who has so intrigued him. And she, of course, at once passed it on to Rayon."

Stahlberg's frown grew heavier; he was plainly disturbed. And young Prentiss, watching him, noted that for all the big jaw was set firmly, the mouth was weak.

A little later the two passed the glittering group of officers on the Cathedral steps. Vicente Rayon held out his hand cordially.

"Colonel Stahlberg!" said he.

The young Austrian bowed, rather coldly. But Rayon's cold eyes settled on Stuart Prentiss, and an expression of mockery came into them.

"Two years of armed scuffling and mob movements," he said, "must have bored you when you were with the Yankees. You will have little to report——"

"Times have changed, arms have changed, methods have changed," said Stahlberg. "For all their jeers, the future will show that the strategists of Europe have learned much of Meade and Grant, and Johnston and Lee."

Stahlberg and young Prentiss passed on; at the door of the Cathedral they paused, exchanged a few words; then the Austrian went in, the American retraced his steps, and the insolent eyes of Rayon followed him across the plaza.

RAYON entered the Cathedral. The vast place was brilliant with color; upon the high altar burned hundreds of waxen lights; gold gleamed; the heavy notes of an organ rolled through the lofty spaces.

Almost in the doorway, Rayon felt a hand laid upon his shoulder, a white, light hand; and turning he saw the glowing face, the deep, dark eyes of Theresa Reuchard. It was a different Theresa Reuchard—much changed from the girl seen in Spanish Pete's gambling hall five years before. She had the same high-held head, and perfect confidence of manner; but her beauty had a more complete significance. She greeted Rayon eagerly.

"Vicente!" she cried. "Such a wonderful thing! Such news!"

He looked at her; but in her haste to go on she did not notice his bored expression.

"News?" he said. "Of what?"

"I have made a discovery. Quite by chance, too. And it is a most vital thing." She drew him to one side; the throngs entering the Cathedral passed within a few yards of them, but it was as though they were quite alone. "It is a thing, if properly managed, Vicente, that will win the Austrian, Stahlberg, over to you."

Rayon's eyes shone.

"If you can tell me how to do that," he said, "you will have brought me news, indeed."

"To win a man to a different way of thinking," said Theresa Reuchard, "requires a lure he can't resist. And, Vicente, I have found one for Stahlberg."

In the shadow of a column stood a beautiful girl, brown-haired, with gentle eyes and a complexion as fair and as clear as an

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April blossom. And the pointing finger of Theresa Reuchard fixed upon her.

"Look!" said the Frenchwoman to the Mexican. "There by the column."

Rayon's glance went to the spot; and instantly his eyes lighted.

"Why," said he, "it's old Prentiss's niece. And alone!"

The Frenchwoman laughed.

"A moment ago she was not," said Theresa Reuchard. "She was standing inside, and a *caballero* spoke to her. Being timid, she came outside. She has lost the woman her uncle always sends with her, and she is seeking her."

The brows of the Mexican had gathered in a frown; his lips drew back from his teeth.

"A *caballero* spoke to her! Who was he?"

"It was Stahlberg." The hand of Theresa Reuchard was tight upon Rayon's arm. "If you had seen him you'd have known in an instant that he was in love with her. At once I inquired of some ladies who seldom lack information about such things; they told me the girl never appears alone at the Cathedral, but Stahlberg is hovering about for an opportunity to speak with her. Vicente, it is just as though Fate had put this man into your hands."

There was a flame of jealousy in the Mexican's eyes; but there was also craft, a cold seeking for opportunity.

"If the Austrian is in love with her, something may be done," said he. "But all Goths are stupid; and this one sometimes strikes me as being particularly so."

"Vicente," she said, "no man, no matter what his race, can resist love." As she spoke Stahlberg came out of the Cathedral; his eyes went about; and the moment they rested upon the girl by the column his look was unmistakable. "Do you see? What plainer thing do you want than that? He is fascinated. This is a fortunate thing, Vicente; it is most fortunate; and properly managed, it will do all you hope for."

SEÑORA MARQUEZ had resumed her search for her charge as soon as the crowd had scattered, and now she found her.

"Señorita!" she said. "Oh, how I have felt! How my heart beats! I could not tell where you had gone. I dreaded what your good uncle would say to me."

The girl smiled quietly.

"He will not know," she said. "Do not tell him, señora. It is only a little thing; it does not matter."

Señora Marquez was not a woman of slow wit; her eyes were quick and the brain behind them was quicker; she noted that the girl's glance went, while she spoke, in a certain direction. It was a shy glance, but it had a quality that took the older woman's attention. So, glancing in the same direction, she caught sight of Stahlberg; and at once she began smiling and chiding.

"It is the young foreign señor, once more. How persistent he is! But you must not look toward him, señorita," she said. "Your uncle would not be pleased."

However, in spite of the good dame's protestations, and her immediate and protective hovering about her charge, it was easy to see that she was not without interest in the matter; indeed, more than once she smiled over her shoulder at the young Austrian; and now he lifted his hat and bowed eagerly.

"We will go in," said the girl. "I think the service has already begun." There was a red spot in her cheeks; but she held her head averted. "Come, señora."

But Señora Marquez was in no haste; here was a little matter which took her fancy: a handsome young man, a beautiful girl, and without question, they were much interested in each other. So, as the girl turned and passed through the great doors of the Cathedral, the señora delayed just a trifle. For she, with a knowing eye, had perceived certain things. Stahlberg passed her; there was the chink of several gold pieces in the señora's palm; and there was also the rustle of a note passed to her. And the good woman smiled contentedly; and as Stahlberg went his way she followed her charge into the Cathedral.

"A note!" said Theresa Reuchard. "A love note for the girl!" Her eyes glistened; she looked at Rayon as the broad skirts of Señora Marquez vanished through the church door. "Nothing could be better than that, Vicente. The girl will have it in a few moments; and if I know anything of the thrill such a thing gives, she will keep it."

There was anger in the eye of the Mexican; but his lips wore a smile as he said: "Well, and what then?"

"While she has it, we must speak to her

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"It is the young foreign senor," said Senora Marquez. "How persistent he is! But you must not look toward him, senorita!"

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uncle," said the Frenchwoman. "He will be here at the service, Vicente. I have something to propose to him that such an old fox will see instantly. I have something to tell him, Vicente—and to tell you when I get you together—that I am sure will please you both."

A VERY little while later, in a room in the Hotel Europe, which had long windows and a balcony overlooking the plaza, Simon Prentiss, older, drier and more crafty-looking than he had been five years before, sat at a table with Theresa Reuchard and Vicente Rayon.

"A note," said he, in his dry voice, while the old, hard eyes glinted; "a love note to my niece, from the Austrian, Stahlberg! I have never yet laid eyes on this young man, but I shall make it my business to do so in the near future."

"Your niece is beautiful," said the Frenchwoman. "She is just the type to fascinate a Goth—gentle, young, with lovely hair and slim hands."

But old Simon paid no attention to this; his eyes were fixed upon Rayon.

"There are a good many things upon which we do not agree," said the old man. "But you have an attractive way with you, Rayon; you know how to put things temptingly; sometimes you influence me against my better judgment. If this young Austrian, Stahlberg, is in love with my niece as you say he is, it may be that it will lead to matters of interest—but only if other and greater things form themselves according to your plans."

"They have so formed themselves," said Rayon. "And there is every indication that they will so continue! I hoped that Europe would interfere in Mexico, did I not? and Europe has done so. I desired that France send an army; the French force is here and the country is conquered."

"But you are not satisfied," said old Simon Prentiss, his cackling laugh thin and acid. "You have the French; now you want more Austrians."

Theresa Reuchard gestured with both hands.

"The French, alone, are not enough. We must have a greater show of force. And, then, the French are greedy. I am ashamed of my own countrymen."

"A greater Austrian interest in Mexico will cause a change in the French manner," said Rayon. "As it is they are too much for themselves."

"You have no desire, then, further to enrich the fat burghers of Lyons and Lille and other French towns," cackled old Simon.

"I have a desire to enrich myself—and those who aid me," said Rayon. "The power that lies undisturbed in those vast tracts of country that will join themselves to Mexico as it increases in strength, must remain in Mexico—must remain with *us*!"

Old Prentiss looked at the man, searchingly, from under bent, grizzled brows.

"Years ago," said the old man, "there was a contriving genius who had it in mind to do the very thing you are trying to do. He saw Mexico wrested from the Spaniards—he saw Texas, Louisiana, what is now Missouri, the far regions of the Rockies, all united, strong, rich, to do with as he would. But the dream never came to realization."

"That man was Aaron Burr," said Rayon, nodding. "Yes, he had a keen vision, but he only sensed imperfectly what I now see clearly. And he failed because the project was not ripe in his day. But it is now. More than that, it is in our very hands if we play our cards cleverly."

"But," said old Simon, "will not the Austrians be as greedy as the French?"

Rayon shook his head.

"They have not the same aspirations. Mexico is too far outside the circle Austria desires to influence. If we can force Franz Josef into this region, he will come for the sole purpose of putting power into the hands of Maximilian. And Maximilian is not strong enough to hold power," added Rayon, with a laugh. "When his hold upon it relaxes he will call upon me."

There was a sudden outcry from the plaza, a rolling, murmurous cry that was at once greeting and derision. The throngs of people in the neighborhood of the Cathedral had grown more dense; they had been quiet enough, but sullen; everywhere there were resentful looks. With hostile eyes they had regarded the perfect formations and smart military air of the European troops, drawn up to keep them in check. But suddenly there had been a movement; cries went up; the crowd stirred feverishly. There were a few cheers; but those who

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uttered them were at once made targets for looks of hate.

"THE empress!" came the cry, across the plaza. "The empress is coming!"

Again the scattered cheers, mingled with hoots of derision and groans. Sternly the officers of the force in the plaza spoke to their men; the lines of rifles came to a ready. Vicente Rayon from a window saw this and shrugged his shoulders.

"It is in the Mexican blood to hate government," he said.

"This one will never be popular," said Simon Prentiss, shaking his head, and looking out at the swaying crowd. "Never."

"Well, that speaks loudly for its prospects of life," said the Mexican. "For the government that has that in it that would make it popular with swine like these, would not live a month. An unpopular government—strongly administered—is the only kind that will prosper."

"What's your notion of a strongly administered government?" asked old Prentiss, his hard old eyes upon Rayon.

"One carried on for the benefit of the intelligent—and supported by an army."

The old man nodded; he seemed to favor this.

"Your ideas are usually good, Rayon, though sometimes too sweeping." His covetous old hands rubbed together and a look of greed came into his face. "But I like your thought of the rich metals in the hills and streams of the far regions now controlled by the United States. I like it well. These deposits are of uncounted value; they are awaiting the hand of a few fortunate and enterprising men; and who knows, Rayon, who those men shall be?"

"Give me what aid you can, and you shall be one of them," said the Mexican. "Let us once make Mexico strong; let us throw an armed force of sufficient numbers into that remote region of the west. One blow will destroy the few links of railroad the Americans have built, and Aaron Burr's dream of a western empire will be realized."

Most greedy, money-grubbing men have a credulous strain in them; and old Simon Prentiss was not without it. The prospect of great gains always dazzled him. And so he listened to Rayon, and to the Frenchwoman; and when he left them, at last, they looked at one another, satisfied.

"The old hawk will fly far," said the Mexican. "His kind always do when once they have committed themselves. As to the matter of Stahlberg, leave it in his hands. He is crafty, and may give you your wish in a few days."

THE passage of the Empress Carlotta to the Cathedral had put the Mexican populace gathered in the plaza in a humor for self-expression. Their shouting was now continuous; but the lines of troops had the situation carefully in hand and there seemed no prospect of a dangerous outbreak.

But the press of people was very great and when Theresa Reuchard and Rayon left the Hotel Europe the surge held them to the very doors. Something had happened; across the plaza the shouting had suddenly increased; there was a leaping excitement, a sort of whirlpool of interest.

"Americano!" came the shout. "Americano!"

Rayon sneered.

"More of those Confederate beggars, I suppose," he said.

But the Frenchwoman, who stood upon the top step, had a view over the heads of the crowd.

"No," she said; "the man they are cheering is no Confederate. He wears the insignia of the north. He is a Yankee!"

Through the clamoring, cheering throng came a tall young man in a buckskin jacket, a wide-rimmed felt hat, blue army trousers and the high boots of a cavalryman. He was laughing at the antics of the crowd, and his white teeth flashed. The hand of Theresa Reuchard touched the arm of her escort.

"Vicente," she said. "Do you recall him? It is the Irishman, Kildare, whom we saw that time at St. Joe—five years ago."

Good-humored, good-looking and smiling, Tom Kildare made his way through the cheering people. Their delight at his appearance was plainly evident, for news of the attitude of the government at Washington had reached their ears despite all efforts to prevent it; and they saw in the young trooper's insignia a symbol of the

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mighty power which might yet strike to free them from the clutch of Europe.

"Señores," said Kildare, as he shook the hands held out to him, "it's tickled to the heart I am to see you so good-natured. Señorita"—to a raven-haired girl—"I thank you. As I touch your hands, I kiss your lips. Sure"—and he grinned at the dark, animated faces all about him—"if Phil Sheridan had known you'd be so glad to see me, he'd have sent me into Mexico City long ago."

Through the hubbub and excited clamor of the plaza, a voice was suddenly raised in a shout.

"Juarez! Long live Juarez!"

There was a hush after this daring cry, for the name of the deposed chief of the Mexican Republic was forbidden. Instantly there came harsh-voiced orders from those in command of the troops; bayonets came to a level, and the line of steel began driving the populace back.

A French major approached Kildare.

"You'll kindly leave the Plaza, monsieur, at once," spoke he, authoritatively. "Your presence excites the people; and it will be no credit for us to be forced to fire upon them."

KILDARE smiled good-naturedly.

"Right, monsieur," he said. "I'll do all I can to help you in that same." He looked at the mass of people—men and women—falling back before the leveled steel. "Poor divils, it's little enough they have to cheer about: and if you begin burning your powder, they'd have less."

He turned away; noting the open gate of the Hotel Europe and the little garden beyond, with its cool-looking palms and small white tables, he approached.

"Faith, it's the best-looking place I've seen yet," he told himself. "A glass of wine and a crumb or two to eat, and I'll feel all right after my twelve-hour ride."

In the garden he summoned Pablo. The worthy host was not at all sure of his guest; he had seen the commotion his presence created on the Plaza, and he feared a renewal of it on his premises. Then the soldiers would enter, and in times like those, so Pablo had found, it did not do to attract the attention of the military in too persistent a manner. So he approached Kildare reluctantly.

"I'll have a small bottle of wine," said the cavalryman. "And any bit of something that'll not be much trouble to yourself nor me, señor."

Pablo, reluctant still, but not seeing how he could refuse, turned away to carry out this order. The French captain, Duroc, entered the garden at this moment. He saw Kildare immediately, and stood watching him, his light-colored eyes filled with all the cold cruelty of the cat. Then he approached Rayon and Theresa.

"Do you see him?" asked Duroc. "Am I mistaken, or is it our friend of that night at Espirito Santo?"

Rayon nodded; he said nothing, but his mouth was hard-set.

"I owe that free-acting young man something," continued Duroc. "That one of his bullets missed me that night was quite an accident." He again turned his eyes upon Kildare. "I think I'll have a word or two with him."

The hand of Theresa Reuchard was upon Duroc's arm; and her voice was low-pitched and full of anger, as she said: "Kill him, Duroc! I have heard your swordsmanship praised; prove to me you are the master they say you are. Call him out, and kill him!"

At that moment she again felt the hate for Tom Kildare she had felt that morning in the public room of the Great Western Hotel at St. Joe. There was a red fury in her hate then; for she had promised this man's aid to Rayon; she had promised his aid most confidently, and the confidence had been based on her beauty. She would fascinate him; she would render him powerless to resist any demand she might make, and then she would deliver him as a willing tool to the Mexican. But at the moment she knew she was most beautiful, when her eyes were brimming with allurement, when she had gone out of her way to attract his attention, he had all but ignored her; he had passed her by with a nod; he had turned his back upon her and she had never seen him afterwards, until now.

"Play with him as a cat plays with a mouse, Duroc," she said. "And then make an end of him."

Surrounded by enemies, pursued by a woman's hatred, Kildare depends for his very life on cool self-mastery. See the next instalment of "Kildare" in December EVERYBODY'S—out November 15th.

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Full Circle

Women Very Often Go the Long Way Round—But They Are Often Waiting for Their Men-Folk, Even So, at the Journey's End

By Charles Saxby

FROM where he perched on the gallery railings, Manuel Cajal surveyed the woman near him. She was so still, he thought, with some uneasiness. But then everything was still just then. Even the canaries in the patio below had ceased their trilling, caught in the hush of the brief afterglow.

Through the open arches came a wide view. A sky all breathless saffron with the mountains of Haiti, across the border, rising against it like shapes of blue slate. All about was the Cibao, a sun-baked, dusty plain, dotted with thorn scrub and white villages. A specter of a world it looked in that light, as if seen with startling clearness in some greenish crystal. And over all hung that strange and sinister quality which always seems to dog the footsteps of the Spaniard. There was something of that about that woman, too, sitting there as though caught in one of those motionless calms which presage the coming of a hurricane.

A charming woman, Doña Luisa Altorrez; twenty-six, pleasantly widowed, slender and ivory-pale. Her eyes were her chief beauty, dark, lustrous and with a spark in them. Also her hair, blue-black, piled about a great silver comb. Add a gown of trailing widow's black, a fan covered with silver spangles, a voice like a love lament on a distant cello—you can also add seven hundred acres of fat sugar land, a cocoa grove up near Ouanaminthe, and this home in Santa Marta.

A charming woman indeed; Cajal, forty, plump, subtly luscious as an overripe melon, sucked in his lips as he looked at her. Of course there was that affair—whatever it may have been—with del Pilar, the irreconcilable. But from the entrenchment of those sugar lands Doña Luisa could defy scandal, and with del Pilar now safely dead one could overlook that. In fact a broad-minded man like himself could overlook much for Luisa Altorrez.

He sprang suddenly from his perch.

"Luisa——"

"*Eh bueno?* I am here."

"Why do you torment me so?"

She surveyed him through narrowed, sleepy eyes. This was a game of which she knew every move; he played it well, she noted, thumping his round chest with proper fervor.

"I do not ask you to come."

"How can I keep away?" he wailed. "Why will you not listen to me, for what do you hope now that—that——"

He stopped there, but she quietly finished the sentence.

"Now that José del Pilar is dead, shot by the soldiers of the American occupation. That is what you would say, no?"

"I was considering your feelings, dear lady."

"And is it in consideration of my feelings that you press love upon me with José only a week gone? Do you think that a woman forgets so easily?"

"I have seen them do so."

"Then you may see one—remember."

"And when I do, what then?"

SHE surveyed him again. That simile of a melon had been her own, and she amended it now, remembering a melon which she had found as a child. Overripe, burst open, and when she had kicked at it she had found a little snake coiled inside. That had been interesting, a snake in a melon,

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and she was in need of interest just now.

"I don't know yet," she answered. "I must find out something first, and when I do——" She shrugged it all off, smiling brilliantly at him. "But enough of myself. Tell me, how is it that Don Manuel honors poor Santa Marta these days? I thought you were in San Domingo city, busy with politics."

"I have had affairs out here in the Cibao."

"And have they been successful?"

He smiled at that, a hidden smirk which brought a cloud of malice about his full lips.

"Entirely; and, I trust, successful for you also."

"For me?"

"You are always first in my thoughts."

"That is news to me. They say in the island that Don Manuel Cajal has his eyes upon the presidency and the National Palace."

"That he may lay them both at your feet."

She changed again, dropping her manner of high comedy, glancing sharply at him.

"IT IS time we talked, you and I. You love me, no?—as your kind of man loves a woman. But before there can be anything between us there are things that we must understand together."

The stillness was breaking now. With the fading of the afterglow the land breeze was already clacking the palm fronds outside; the hills of Cuchillo de Oro were blackening against the pale promise of the moon. She rose, pacing the gallery as though the coming of night were setting free forces within herself.

"What game is it that you play? And with whom do you play it? With our people, or with these American usurpers?"

"The Americans have come to San Domingo to stay. What can we, with our pitiful half an island, our few hundred thousand people, do against their vast country? They benefit us too; already our peso is worth twice as much as a year ago, and our commerce——"

"Pesos, commerce," she blazed, cutting him short. "And must we submit to being treated as negroes by these American officers and their haughty women? Is it for that that our people are shot, even at the altar while hearing mass?"

"That was an accident," he soothed. "A drunken marine discharging his rifle at random."

"There are too many marines and too much to drink in San Domingo. And all this that the money pigs of Nueva York may have their toll of us."

"But a military occupation," he argued. "It must see that its orders are obeyed. They do not always understand our ways, but——"

Her anger dropped from her in a brilliant tinkle of laughter, mocking and metallic.

"Thank you, you have indeed shown me where your sympathies lie. An angry woman can often get the truth. But, since you support the Americans in San Domingo city, how is it that out here in the Cibao you ride at night through the *rastrajo* scrub, visiting the hidden camps of our young men patriots?"

Cajal gaped at that, his jaw ludicrously slack. Seated again, magnetic and relaxed, she signed him to a chair with a wave of her fan.

"You did not think that I knew so much, no? Listen, my friend, they begin to whisper of you out in the bush. José's death has aroused them and they say that Manuel Cajal plays the friend overmuch in the corridors of the American Administrador. Have a care. It is not pleasant—the way they kill traitors out there in the lonely hills."

He knew the death to which some had gone out in the *rastrajo* and his whole dusky mass contracted; more at her tone than at her words, it sounded so fateful.

"You speak as though they had cause against me," he protested.

"Suspicion is enough."

"Even so I would never go to that. I have means," he nodded, tapping a pocket of his waistcoat. "I had it from an old Guarichi down the Main. It is quick, and it leaves no trace."

"Curari?" she shuddered.

HE NODDED again in an agreement so bland and smiling that it was almost a threat. They understood each other perfectly, those two. Two minds, reared in that fanatical Spanish pride and prejudice, yet each keen in intrigue. She knew exactly what that smile portended. He loved her, in his way; he would stop at little to get her, but at the same time, if she

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menaced his safety. She laughed once more, life was almost interesting again. That laugh lowered her guard for an instant and Cajal made a quick thrust.

"And you, *doña mía*, if you are so faithful to our people how is it that they whisper so of your—your friendship, let us say—for this American officer?"

"You mean el señor Teniente Lawrence?" she asked, with the large-eyed surprise of a child.

"Who else?"

"*Ay de mí*, he is nothing but a boy. He is lonely out here in the Cibao and he looks on me—I verily believe—as almost a mother. I like to have him come to my house."

"Because you can wring from him information which you send to those in the bush, no?"

"Had I been doing that would my José have fallen into the American trap?"

"AH, HE knew it was a trap, at the last," Cajal purringly agreed. "He cried out for vengeance on the one who had betrayed him and they say that he accused—even cursed—yourself."

That thrust reached her very flesh and she sprang up, quivering with the pain of it.

"You say that José suspected *me*—that his dying breath was a curse upon my name. You lie, foul pig that you are. You lie; José knew why I endured this American, why I sat hour after hour, giving him wine, flattering, soothing him, waiting for the moment when I could glean some knowledge of their movements that would be of use to José."

"Thank you, Doña Luisa, thank you a thousand times!" Cajal broke in ironically. "As you said, an angry woman can sometimes learn the truth. She can also, if you make her angry enough, be made to speak it."

"Oh—you—you——"

"Now I know where you stand. A dangerous position; a word in San Domingo city and Doña Luisa would face jail as a spy for the irreconcilables."

It was the man's turn to laugh now and he did so, a chuckling laugh, fruitily mellow.

"Come, since we each know so much, would it not be better to tie our knowledges up together? We could go far in partnership, you and I."

"Then—oh, God—it was not true that José cursed me?"

Cajal's lips pouted forward, torrid and ugly as he realized that she had heard nothing since those words.

"Enough of José. Del Pilar is dead and I am alive; remember that the living do not care to be passed over for the dead."

"But the dead can still stand between the living," she answered. "Listen then, you want—me?" The fan flirted a forbidding gesture as he advanced. "There is no haste—let us understand one another first. My heart you can never have; it is buried in the hole into which those pigs flung José. But that which encases the place where my heart once was, all this that you see and so desire, can be yours—for a price."

"I will marry you, of course."

She laughed at that and the sound was not pleasant.

"As you wish, but the price is not that. The payment must be—the name of whoever it was that betrayed José to the Americans."

He quivered again, his jaw sagging, his words oozing over it.

"But that is impossible—I do not know——"

"I have spoken."

FROM a near-by church tower the bells began to ring the Angelus: those infernal, eternal Spanish bells, filling the place with a brazen clangor. At their note she turned to some tiny candles that burned before a shrine, all paper flowers and a simpering plaster image of the Virgin.

"Nothing else; listen, here before the Virgin I swear it. Regina Cœli, Mother of God, I vow that I will not eat or sleep until I have learned the name of the man who sent José to his death."

She knelt, crossing herself. A black-clad woman kneeling before a shrine is always a graceful figure. As she rose her face held something remote, almost of peace, as though she had shifted her burden to another world. She passed him, maddeningly close, but seemingly miles away.

"If you will not tell me, Don Manuel, there are those who will."

"Who are they?"

"The Teniente Lawrence, for one. He knows who it was."

Everybody's Magazine, November, 1923

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"But he is a soldier and he cannot disobey his orders."

"No?"

That monosyllable brought him uneasiness, there was a hint of so much assurance behind its cool question. He shifted his attack.

"Perhaps you think that he loves you? Have you seen what he carries in his pocket here, next to his breast? A woman's picture, a woman in his own country."

"And she is two thousand miles away, while I, my friend, am—here."

"Give me but a little time. I will find this out for you, I swear it."

"It must not be long. Remember my vow."

"A day at the most."

THE raucous blare of a motor horn burst in on them and there was a flash of an olive-drab car in the street below. Cajal hastily dived for his hat.

"There is the Teniente now; I have business with him. I will see if I can catch him in the Plaza."

"He will be here soon if you care to wait for him."

"No—no. I must see him before—I mean—Doña Luisa, I kiss your hands until to-morrow."

"To-morrow, at this hour," she agreed, then called down into the patio. "Oh, Pepe—Juan Blas! Where are you, lazy beasts? Bring lanterns to light the *señor caballero* out, bring lights to the *gran' scala*."

"I beg you, no ceremony," Cajal interjected. "I will run out by the little gate. The Teniente leaves his car in the *calle* behind there and I might catch him——"

"Do you think that I will permit a distinguished guest to leave my house like a servant?" she smiled. "Oh, *mozos*, come here!"

They came, bearing lanterns, and Cajal was perforce ushered with much fuss and circumstance down the stairs and out at the iron-grilled gate of the patio. Smiling and bowing from her gallery to his retreating figure, Doña Luisa whispered a question to herself.

"Why then was he so anxious to meet the Teniente 'before'? Does that mean before the Teniente had seen me?"

A YOUNG man about to visit a charming woman cares little by what door he enters her house. The little Calle Perdido offered a parking place for the car, so it was usually by the lesser entrance that Lawrence came into the Casa Altorrez. As Doña Luisa had suspected, he was already knocking on it as Manuel Cajal was bowed out at the gate.

The afterglow had faded now and the moon was lifting itself above the hills. That terrible moon of the tropics, yellow and subtly blighting, that makes the night almost as pitiless as the day. The candles were lit in the *sala* but Doña Luisa drew the curtains of faded, embossed leather. For the scene she was planning moonlight, and that dim patio would make a better setting.

Lawrence came in, very young, very trim in his uniform as lieutenant of marines. He was an attractive young fellow, physically fit, socially trained, completely sure of himself. He bowed, with a gallant affectation of Spanish courtesy.

"Doña Luisa, I kiss your hands."

"So you say, but you never do it," she smiled. Then, as she extended her hands she checked his movement. "No, I would rather you did not. It would not be really yourself."

"I am going to kiss them before I go," he declared gaily. "I have come to say good-by, for a while at least."

"You are going away?"

"I have three months' leave and I am going home."

"That means much to you, of course. I forget sometimes that your home is far from here and that we of the island are after all but strangers to you."

"Some of you have become my friends," Lawrence protested. "Doña Luisa Altorrez, for instance."

"Friends?" She considered the word, her eyes upon him. "Do you know that that is strange to me, this having a man for my—friend? Down in these warm islands the men usually demand of us more, or nothing."

"But believe me, I am your friend."

"I know it," she nodded, a trifle dryly. "Come, Señor Teniente, since you are to leave so soon, tell me one thing. In all the twelve months you have been in the island you have never looked at any of our ladies

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except as—a friend. That can mean only one thing, that there is another woman somewhere else."

He flushed a little, the darker stain of it visible even under the false pallor cast by the moon. He laughed too, in a sort of joyous embarrassment.

"Well—there is. We are to be married as soon as I arrive."

"Aha! So I was right," she triumphed. "And she is of your own people, no?"

"Of course."

Her fan clicked at that, the words came from him with such an unconscious arrogance, but her smile held unchanged.

"And she is beautiful?"

"I should say," he cried. "She is tall and fair and pale, just like some stately lily."

"Then she is not like—like us San Domingans?" Her fan described a laughing negation. "No, you need not compliment."

"But you are beautiful too," Lawrence stammered.

"I thank you for that much."

She moved to the railings, the moonlight painting her in black and white against the dark well of the courtyard, all shadow and great silvered fronds. She was drooping, her voice a carefully controlled throb.

"YOU must go, of course. How could we of San Domingo hope to keep you against the call of your own blood? To you we are just 'spikadees'; strange foreign creatures to be coldly ordered by your country for our own good. Little monkey-chattering people of the tropics, as nothing against your vast land. But oh, my—friend—remember that even 'spikadees' have—hearts."

Lawrence listened, vaguely troubled, rather wishing that he had not come. She had never been like this before; hang the women, they were always—something or other. She seemed younger, standing there almost tragically alone against that great blatant moon. So much prettier than usual, so much more magnetic. Against his own will he found himself drawing closer to her, a queer bubbling under his breast bone, his finger tips on fire.

She knew to a fraction what he was feeling, almost his very thoughts. A young man to be her "friend"—she had not realized until this moment how much that had rankled all these months. She could change that if she chose—for a while. Then she looked at him, so trained in all the arts of wholesale killing and so ignorant of all the arts of life, his youthful conceit already breaking under her practised hand. How he had spoken of that girl in his own land. There came to her that tenderness which every woman feels for a lover; besides, she could never hope to hold him. As though by the turning of some inner switch that streaming magnetism ceased. Her smile was gay as she looked up at him.

"But I have not congratulated you yet. Well, I do so now. And you must let me give you a little package for *her*, that you may both sometimes think of your friend in San Domingo."

Lawrence drew back, wiping his forehead in relief. She hadn't—well—meant anything then. He had nearly made an ass of himself, too.

"When do you go?" she asked.

"To-morrow. I only got the news of my leave to-day."

"It was good of you to come to bid me good-by. Listen, I have been a good friend to you, have I not?"

"The best a chap ever had," he breathed, and believed it.

"Then before you go will you do something for me?"

"Anything that I can."

"You know my people. We may seem foolish to you but we are proud, passionate, loving our island, resenting your American occupation. And any one of us who shows friendship to you Americans is in danger. Even I have received threats."

"You mean because of—of me?"

"I did not say that. You have been my welcome guest, and that is sufficient. But you are going away and I must stay here—alone. If only I knew of some one on whom I could call for help in case of danger."

"Call on the nearest American marine, he will protect you."

"Your marines are few and do not always understand. If I but knew one of my own people, one who has proved his friendship to your administration here. For instance," she hesitated, looking away from him, suddenly fragile and pathetic. "If I only knew who it was that gave the information about José del Pilar."

Everybody's Magazine, November, 1923

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LAWRENCE'S voice cut coldly across her speech.

"But that is official. I could not possibly tell any one that."

She drooped still more, supporting herself by a hand upon the railing. He thought he caught a smothered sob. Then she resumed her full height, facing him proudly.

"I thank you, Señor Teniente. You are right; believe me I did not realize that I might be suspected of playing Dalila."

"But really, Doña Luisa, it was not—it is simply—one *can't* disobey orders, you know. But honestly, I didn't mean——"

He was floundering now, wondering how he came to be on the defensive when he was so entirely right. A cool smile stopped him.

"I understand. I begged too great a favor and you showed me how a beggar should properly be answered."

"But I had not meant—I will tell you anything else."

"No, no; let us forget it. I did not think what I was asking. But if you knew how I am placed, how my own people draw away from me, whispering suspicion of the friend of the Americans!"

Her cool pride was gone now and she looked shrunken, even desperate, her black and white giving her the appearance of some hunted pathos of the moving-picture screen. It made him feel a brute to refuse; he knew that to be unreasonable, and yet——

"Any other way that I can serve you, I will. But my orders—oh, can't you see?"

"I understand, my friend. You have your career to think of."

"Oh, if it were only myself! But orders *must* be obeyed."

"And they shall be. Forget that I asked you, forget me too. After all, Luisa Altorrez is but an incident in your life. It was pleasant perhaps to come to her house and she was—oh, so glad to have you do so. But now you must go on to other things, as a man does. And I will stay behind, as a woman must; and face—whatever comes."

"Hell."

He muttered and fumed, the perspiration pricking out on his forehead as he strode the gallery with steps that he strove to make firm. What a mess! A woman, and a pretty one too, in danger, and probably, though she did not say it, because of her friendship for himself.

"Doña Luisa, if I should——"

"No, no, no," she interrupted; "you shall not tell me."

"If I do, will you swear never to——"

"But I shall not permit you, I will not listen."

"—never to repeat the name to any one else?"

"But Señor Teniente, I beg of you not to do this. I understand so well why you fear to do it."

"You think it is because I am afraid?" he blazed.

"No, no; one could never think that of you. But there is no need; believe me, I have courage to face the worst."

He had her hands now, gripping them violently as if that would stop her words.

"I'll show you if I'll allow a woman to face things on my account. I'll show you if I am afraid or not. Hush, I can't speak it loudly. . . . It was Manuel Cajal."

It was done now, past recalling. Her only answer was a gasp, a widening of her eyes as though enormous vistas were suddenly opening before them.

She saw so much in that instant. That overripe melon truly held a snake. As though it had been her own, she saw the coilings of Cajal's mind in motive on tortuous motive. He would indeed go far—if he went at all.

Lawrence moved moodily away, the charm gone in realization of his own imprudence.

Some one was knocking on the big gate, the echoes of it resounding in the patio below. Sliding back the leather curtains, Doña Luisa let the light from the *sala* flood the gallery.

"That will be Don Manuel at the gate. I have been expecting him back, for I know that he wishes to see you. Do not let him know that you have told me."

She moved toward the stairs, leaving Lawrence alone. Cajal coming there? Here was another mess.

There was no fuss of ceremony about Cajal's reentry to the Casa Altorrez. Brushing aside the *mozo* who opened the gate, he was already at the *sala* door, his words coming thick with haste. Who could tell what might have already happened with that young innocent fifteen minutes alone with Doña Luisa?

"El Señor Teniente, is he here?" he demanded.

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"*Assuramente*, Don Manuel," Luisa replied. "Of a sureness he is here."

"I must see him at once."

"See, then—there he stands."

In attempted ease, which only resulted in too much cordiality, Lawrence advanced.

"Glad to see you, Don Manuel."

I must speak with you at once."

Lawrence glanced for his hostess' permission. Hang the woman, how many people was she, he wondered? This was a different creature from that fear-haunted shadow of the gallery. A gay woman, her lips brilliant, her eyes lit by hard raillery.

"Is it about the information which Don Manuel promised me that he would see the Teniente?" she asked. "Because if so, he can spare himself the trouble. The Teniente has promised to tell me himself."

"That must not be," Cajal exclaimed, his darkly pinkish flesh contracting in an ugly spasm.

"But American officers do not break their word," she smiled.

"The Teniente would disobey orders in giving that information."

"But he would equally disobey them by telling you," she laughed, surveying him with that bright mockery. "Or is it that you have already learned elsewhere who it was that betrayed José del Pilar?"

"Yes, yes, I have learned," Cajal put eagerly in. "I heard it just a few moments ago from a friend in the Plaza. I hastened at once to tell you. It was—a woman—her name——"

"Hush," Doña Luisa cried, stopping him with a flash of her fan. "It is the Teniente who has the right to tell me now; besides, I think I have more faith in him than in the rumors of the Plaza. Don Manuel may have been misinformed.

"Oh, you men!" she laughed on, looking at them. "You are so solemn. Come, perhaps something to drink may make you more amusing."

She moved toward the sideboard where cobwebby bottles stood amidst an array of glass and silver. She felt as if she were a child again, kicking at an overripe melon from which came a fascinatingly appalling hiss. Such an unrevealing melon, needing to be burst open by a kick before one saw that which was within it.

"It is in order that she may have a friend that Doña Luisa seeks that name," Lawrence said, and with a shrug, a too wide smile, Cajal accepted it.

"DOÑA LUISA has always the best intentions."

"And Don Manuel has the best hand for a cocktail in all the island," she laughed. "Come then, mix us one of your famous drinks as a farewell to el Señor Teniente. He leaves us to-morrow and his parting gift to me is to be the name of the one to whom I am to be—a friend."

Lawrence gratefully reacted to the smiles about him. After all these people were like children, always seeming on the verge of some mysteriously desperate affair, but it always ended in nothing. As Cajal moved to the sideboard Doña Luisa drew Lawrence apart.

"It was not that he did not wish me to know, but that he wished to be the one to tell me. There is—talk, let us say—that Don Manuel and myself may marry one of these days."

"But why not let him tell you, then?"

"I may do so, later on," she replied, looking past him into the false depths of a mirror. "But before I do that—tell me, did you ever know a woman who could resist tormenting a man who loves her?"

"I see," he breathed, in another bright enlightenment. "Of course, with a woman a circle is always the shortest distance between two points."

That was one of Lawrence's stock remarks. He had heard it in a play and it had struck him as extraordinarily clever.

"How you know us women!" she exclaimed. "I had thought you innocent—yes. But now I see——"

Cajal was approaching them, with exaggerated comedy as a waiter, bearing three glasses on a salver. With a bow, a flourish of an imaginary napkin, he presented them.

"Doña Luisa, this is for you, especially mixed for a delicate lady. Señor Teniente, a man's drink for yourself. And now, to whom shall we drink?"

"To Doña Luisa," Lawrence declared.

"No; not to me, it must be something to which we can all drink together. Let us drink to that one whose name I am so soon to know. To the one who has proved loyalty to the Americaños, and who will soon—know my loyalty too."

She raised her glass, her eyes sparkling above it on both the men. Then she low-

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ered it untasted, placing it on a little table.

"Señor Teniente, my glass is poisoned."

"What?"

"As I talked with you I looked in the mirror there and I saw Don Manuel drop poison in this glass."

Lawrence was coolly aware of himself now. This was danger and he understood that; it was those puzzling things of peace which so tangled him up. Cajal's face was a blank.

"Doña Luisa either jests, or else she is mad," he said. "What possible reason could I have for wishing her ill?"

"The charge has been made and the contents of that glass must be analyzed," Lawrence returned.

"I protest against such indignity."

"Protest away," Lawrence cheerfully answered. "Doña Luisa, have your servants summon the *jefe politico*."

"And if Don Manuel is found guilty, what then?" she asked.

"He will be sentenced to ten or twenty years on the rock quarries at Forçados."

"Forçados," she cooed. "Forçados, where the political prisoners, the companions of José del Pilar, are confined. I will see that they have word of the reason for Don Manuel's being amongst them; they will welcome him then."

"Come, send for the police," Lawrence ordered.

"I am innocent, I swear it!" cried Cajal in a last effort.

"DON MANUEL can easily prove his words," Doña Luisa purred. "Let him drink the contents of that glass. If he is innocent it will not harm him. If he is not—they say that that poison leaves no trace behind it. He will then have unfortunately died, amongst his good friends, and the Señor Teniente will not have to wait to be witness at his trial."

Lawrence quivered at that. He had not yet thought of the necessity for a trial and of the things which might be told in its course. The story of this evening's foolishness for instance, that alone would wreck his career for years to come. This woman was reminding him of it now and pointing a way—a very Solomon's way, of avoiding it.

"Do you dare to drink from that glass, Cajal?" he asked.

Doña Luisa's eyes narrowed as she looked at the two. The implacable young American; Cajal—ah, the melon had burst now, the snake plainly to be seen, writhing in impotent fear of the impending heel.

Cajal's mind was like a spinning top in a whirl of red and black. Forçados, chained for years amongst the men whom his own word had sent to that blazing hell. That woman—if he had but a knife—or if he could get his hands upon her throat—but there was that lieutenant, his hand upon his revolver, his face like granite.

Straightening in a last pride, Cajal raised the glass.

"I protest the insult, but—since you will have it so——"

He drank, setting back the empty glass.

"Señor Teniente, are you satisfied?"

"Entirely, and I ask your pardon."

Cajal shrugged that aside, turning to the woman.

"And you, Doña Luisa, are you satisfied?"

She was still again, her eyes half closed, almost glazed as if with sleep, her fingers working luxuriously amongst the sticks of her fan.

"I am satisfied—yes."

"Then with your permission I will bid you *adiós*."

He walked firmly to the door. Watching him go Lawrence felt an impulse to run after him and proffer apologies for this silly, woman mess. But there was a dignity about Cajal in that instant which held him back. Then something happened. Cajal seemed to sink in on himself—there came a fall, a crumpled, roundish heap on the floor.

It was no use running to him. Lawrence had too often seen the strangely squalid fall of death not to know it. His eyes round with horror, he turned to the woman.

She was kneeling before that statuette of the Virgin. A graceful picture, a black-clad woman kneeling before a lighted shrine. The silence was long and when she rose her face was serene, almost rapt, as though she had shifted the burden of it all to supreme authority.

"Doña Luisa—what have you done?" Lawrence demanded.

That rapt look held as she slowly described a circle with her fan.

"My friend, I may go—*so*—but—I arrive."

Lawrence stumbled toward the prostrate Cajal. Good God! What a mess—what a country!

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The Tame Cat

The Occasion Does Often Make the Man. And That May Be More True Than First Appearances Show

By Arthur Mills

Illustration by Courtney Allen

WHEN the house-party broke up, two people were glad to see the last of Montague Lusonby, the pale, dark young man whom Amaryllis had imported from Paris.

"Well, I'm glad that parlor serpent has gone, anyway," said Sir Herbert, kicking one of the big logs in the open fireplace.

Ted said nothing. With Amaryllis's blue eyes fixed upon him silence was safest.

"What does the fellow do—loafs about in Paris all the winter, doesn't he?" inquired Sir Herbert.

"He designs tapestry, embroidery, all sorts of things," answered Amaryllis.

"Great Scott!" Sir Herbert kicked the log again, so that a shower of sparks flew up.

"He's doing very well, too. He's clever—isn't he, Ted?" Amaryllis turned to a young man who stood nervously tapping a cigarette against a gold-and-platinum case.

"Yes; rather—at least, I don't know really." Ted's eyes wandered unhappily between the wrathful look on Sir Herbert's face and Amaryllis's encouraging smile.

Ted Naylor himself was not one of the world's workers. In the country he drifted pleasantly from house-party to house-party, and in London from dinner to dance; but he had his place in the universe—he was Amaryllis's "tame cat."

For two years he had served her faithfully, taking her to dances when she needed an escort, coming down to her parties in the country on last-minute invitations, humoring her husband, and making himself pleasant to the guests.

Sir Herbert was a great, big, red-faced fellow of forty-five whose hobbies were cattle-breeding and fox-hunting. Many people could never understand why Amaryllis had married him—Amaryllis, who had red-brown hair and mischievous red lips—Amaryllis with the merry twinkle in her eyes and general air of might-do-anything about her. She was twenty-five years younger than her husband, and her flirtations were like sand on the seashore.

Having kicked the log a couple more times, Sir Herbert took up his heavy hunting-crop and said he must be going.

"Where are they to-day?" asked Amaryllis.

"Other side of Pawford—bad country. Shan't stay out long. Back about five."

Ted looked at the clock; it was only just after ten. For seven happy hours he would have Amaryllis to himself.

"Sure you won't come, Naylor? Got a horse for you if you like."

"No, thank you, Sir Herbert; I won't, really. I've got such a lot of letters to write."

The memory of his last fifteen-mile hack home with Sir Herbert on a wet night was still fresh in Ted's mind. The experience had been aggravated by learning, when he got home, that Amaryllis and Lusonby had spent the evening alone together in Amaryllis's sitting-room.

"Well, take care of yourselves." Sir Herbert stamped out of the hall.

Amaryllis sat down on the fender and looked into the fire. Ted, watching her, thought there was trouble in her blue eyes. After a little she looked up and, said:

"I thought you'd got letters to write?"

"Not any that won't keep till to-morrow," answered Ted. "Ryll, this is the first

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time for a week I've had a chance to get you to myself. I've just been living through the days while all those stupid people were in the house."

Amaryllis ignored the overture.

"Well, I shall have to write some letters," she said. "Will that table do you?" She pointed to a writing-table on the opposite side of the room, and sat down at her own desk.

TED, pretending to write, watched her furtively. He was sure she was troubled about something—deeply troubled. He saw her take a letter out of her handbag, read it through carefully twice, and replace it. Then she began to write, slowly at first, afterward more quickly. Page after page she covered, blotted, and put to one side. Finally, she gathered all the sheets together and read them attentively. She got up, crossed to the fire and reread what she had written. She gave a little petulant gesture, stamped her foot and threw the letter in the fire.

Ted had never seen Amaryllis so upset. He longed to say something or do something to help her.

"Are you going to the Pawford Hunt ball?" he asked casually.

She looked up. His question seemed to startle her.

"I don't know. I may be in Paris."

"In Paris?"

"Yes; but that is between you and me. I haven't made up my mind yet; it's very difficult."

She went back to her desk and took up her pen. Again she wrote for some minutes; again she read through what she had written and again, crossing to the fireplace, carefully tore the letter into small pieces and burned it.

Ted looked at the clock; it was twelve. She had been two hours on that one letter.

"Let us go out a bit," she said; "stuffing indoors all the morning has given me a headache."

They went out and took the path that led to an old yew garden on the west terrace. Ted looked back at the Elizabethan house outlined against the pale blue winter sky. He sniffed the delicious smell of burning wood from the log fires.

"Really, Ryll, you have a most beautiful old place."

"Place!" she said. "A tomb, I call it. For two mortal years I have been buried here without seeing a cat to talk to, and I'm fed up."

Ted made no comment. Something evidently had thoroughly upset Amaryllis. He was pretty sure he could guess what it was—that smooth-tongued, dark-eyed Lusonby. She was infatuated with the fellow—it had been evident during the whole visit. Amaryllis was such a darling! He only hoped—— But of course she would never do anything silly.

Amaryllis walked in silence to the bottom of the garden, turned sharply, said she must get a letter off before lunch and went back to the house.

At luncheon she was brighter. She talked quite gaily. The lines of worry had gone from her forehead; the old sparkle returned to her eyes.

Then, as she was peeling an apple, the clouds came over her again. Ted remembered that apple. He can see it still—one side was a beautiful rosy red, the other bright green. He doubted if it was properly ripe. So, apparently, did Amaryllis, for after looking at it some while she put it back on her plate and pushed the plate away from her.

For some minutes she did not speak. Ted kept silent, too. He was trained to his adored one's moods.

The butler brought in coffee.

"Parks," asked Amaryllis, "have you posted that letter I gave you?"

"Yes, my lady, I took it down to the pillar-box an hour ago."

"What time do they clear the box?"

"Two o'clock, my lady."

She looked at the clock; the hands pointed to two-thirty. "I should like it back," said Amaryllis.

"The postman will have gone by now, my lady."

"Well, send somebody after him."

Parks stroked his chin thoughtfully.

"He won't give letters back—not once they are posted, my lady."

"Oh, but tell him it's from here."

Parks shook his head.

"That postman, he's a Bolshevik. We 'ad trouble with 'im over the same thing before."

Ted, watching Amaryllis, saw her eyes fill with alarm.

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Ted let him pass, then sprang. He slipped the sack deftly over the postman's head and pinioned his arms.

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"All right, Parks. Thank you.

"I must have it back, I must," she said, when Parks had gone. She looked at Ted, who was cracking a walnut.

"Rum sort of chaps, some of the country postmen," he said.

Amaryllis took one of her pretty pink fingers between her teeth.

"Cleared the box at two—be about halfway to Pawford now. *Ted!*" Ted started. "Couldn't you get on one of Herbert's horses, cut through the fields and catch him up?"

"Catch who up?" inquired Ted.

"The postman. And get that letter back."

"But Parks says he's a Bolshevik, and won't give letters back once they are posted."

"Well, make him. He can't mistake it. It's got a threepenny stamp on and is addressed to Paris. There's no one else from here likely to have written to Paris."

"Is it to Lusonby?" Ted looked at Amaryllis keenly.

"Yes." She colored. "I—I—well, never mind. Look here; will you get it back for me, there's a dear boy!"

Thoughts raced through Ted's mind: the intimacy that had sprung up between Amaryllis and the good-looking young man, her distraitness after he had gone, the way she had spent the whole morning writing that one letter and torn up and burned the first two attempts, her expression of discontent in the garden, and, most significant of all, her hint that she might not be much longer in her home.

Good heavens! Was it possible that Amaryllis, laughing, blue-eyed, happy Amaryllis, had planned to run away from her husband? He looked at her. Her pretty, childish face seemed white, drawn, miserable.

"I must have it back," she said.

There was a shake in her voice; she was on the verge of tears.

Ted pushed back his chair.

"I'll go," he said.

"Bless you!" she said fervently.

Amaryllis had 'phoned to the stable to have a horse sent up.

"You ought to catch him at the Pawford Blankney crossroads," she said, as Ted clambered into the saddle.

"Suppose he won't give up the letter when I do find him."

"He *must*," said Amaryllis.

Ted, looking at her, thought that never had he seen more piteous appeal in woman's eyes.

"All right, I'll make him," he said.

As Ted realized, as he galloped across the park, it was all very well for him to say he'd *make* the postman give up the letter, but how he was going to do it was quite a different matter.

MEANWHILE, Andrew Grouch, his mail-bag slung over his shoulder, plodded the high road to Pawford.

As Parks had said, Andrew's politics were distinctly Bolshevistic. A country owning a government that wouldn't give a country postman a bicycle would be all the better for a revolution in Andrew's opinion. As for those folk up at the hall, with their horses and motor-cars, Andrew spat into the ditch at the thought of them.

At which precise moment a young man, riding one of those very same expensive horses, overtook Andrew on the road.

"Good afternoon!" he said.

Andrew gave a perfunctory jerk of his head. Why should this young plutocrat be able to ride about the roads for his amusement, and he not be able to get a bicycle on which to do his work?

"I say," said Ted; "I want to get a letter back that was posted by mistake."

Andrew shook his head.

" 'Gainst orders."

"I tell you it was posted by mistake; it is addressed to Paris."

"Don't matter where it's addressed, 'cept that that's where it'll be delivered."

"But I don't want it delivered."

"What did 'ee post 'um for then?"

Ted argued for several minutes, at the end of which he saw it was hopeless. The only way was to ride on to Pawford and see the postmaster there.

He had gone a little distance when he suddenly remembered that Andrew did not go into Pawford itself, but stopped at the station and put the mail straight on the train, letters and so forth being postmarked on the way up.

What could he do?

Robbing the king's mails was not an enterprise to be undertaken lightly. He might get ten years for it. But if the fellow wouldn't give up the letter of his own accord—— It was deuced awkward.

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The look in Amaryllis's eyes recurred to him—the fear, the wretchedness. He knew without being told what was in the letter. Foolish as she had been to write it, he must at all costs get it back. That letter must never be allowed to fall into Lusonby's hands.

As he thought of the danger hanging over Amaryllis, Ted made up his mind. The letter must be recovered by force. He rode on, looking for a suitable place for the deed.

Quarter of a mile farther on he came to a sharp bend. He jumped off his horse and tied the mare to a gate. He was reflecting on the best method of attack when an old sack near the gate gave him his inspiration. He picked up the sack and crouched under the hedge.

Tramp, tramp, tramp—he heard the postman's shambling tread along the road.

Ted held his breath, grasping the sack in both hands. Eyes glued to the ground, mind still brooding over his grievances, Andrew Grouch rounded the bend.

Ted let him pass, then sprang. He slipped the sack deftly over the postman's head and pinioned his arms.

Andrew spluttered and struggled.

"If you don't stand still I strangle you," Ted shouted through at him, groping frantically in the mail-bag. He took the letters by handfuls and flung them on the road, holding Andrew with one hand and turning them over with the other. Had the letter been posted? He couldn't see it anywhere.

Ah, there it was! He recognized the round, bold handwriting; and there was the hated name—Montague Lusonby, Esq.

He bent, picked up the letter and put it in his pocket.

THERE is a man behind that hedge with a rifle sighted on you," he hissed at Andrew, who was now shivering from head to foot. "If you take that sack off your head before you have counted two hundred and fifty, you'll be a dead man."

Ted jumped across the road to his horse. He had barely got his foot in the stirrup when he saw a sight that nearly stopped his heart. Down the road came a figure in a pink coat ambling along on a big gray horse. Horse and man were unmistakable. It was Sir Herbert returning from hunting.

In the roadway, surrounded by letters, stood Andrew in his sack.

Ted jumped on the mare's back, pushed open the gate and was half-way across the field as Sir Herbert came up.

Sir Herbert regarded the apparition in the roadway.

"What the —— are you doing?"

"Two 'undred and one, two 'undred and two, two 'undred and three," quavered the voice of Andrew.

Then a shriek rent the air as Sir Herbert tore the sack off his head.

"I bin robbed," groaned Andrew, recognizing Sir Herbert.

"Robbed! Who by?"

Andrew looked round dazedly. Suddenly his eyes lit on Ted galloping across the field.

" 'Im!" he screamed. " 'E wanted a letter back, and I wouldn't give it 'im, and now 'e's took it."

Sir Herbert ran to his horse.

"The scoundrel! I'll catch him."

He jumped on the gray's back and pushed through the gate.

Sir Herbert was slightly better mounted, but Ted had a good start. The race promised to be a very even one.

A quick glance over his shoulder reassured Ted that unless Sir Herbert gained ground the distance between them was too great for him to be recognized. A stout post and rails lay directly in his path.

"Wonder if this horse jumps," thought Ted, as he saw the timber. "My Christmas, if you refuse I'll skin you!" He gripped the mare with his knees and sent her at the rails for all she was worth. She cleared them beautifully.

A few moments later a dull crash came to his ears—looking round he saw the gray had taken the rails out by the roots, but was still going strongly.

In his day Sir Herbert had been one of the best heavy-weights across-country for miles round. Of late years he had not jumped much, but he could warm to the chase on occasion. He was warm now; in fact, he was as mad for blood as a foxhound that hasn't been fed for forty-eight hours.

Ted took a stake and bound and very thick bullfinch. The bullfinch, he hoped, might check Sir Herbert. Not a bit of it—the gray went through like a tank in a young plantation.

Ted saw some plow, and made for that. The heavy going would be no easy matter for the gray carrying seventeen stone. But

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the gray was a weight-carrier, and galloped over the plow as though it was a race-track.

Ted felt his mare's wind failing. They'd done two miles at Grand National speed; something would have to give soon. His horse wasn't half in condition, he was sure.

Suddenly, ahead, a strip of silver showed and Ted's heart beat excitedly. He knew that streak of silver; it was Barclay's brook, one of the deepest, widest brooks in the county. Few took that brook who could avoid it, even in the fastest run. The odds at any time were against getting over.

Gripping the mare with steel band knees Ted drove her at the brook and prayed. He felt her rise grandly, felt her throw herself into space, waited, as it seemed, an eternity, and then gave a whoop of joy. He was safely over.

He eased the mare and cantered on. Over his shoulder he could see the pink coat on the gray horse charging down on the brook. A moment of intolerable suspense and then a splash—a mighty splash rising to the level of the top of the willow trees. Sir Herbert was in it.

AMARYLLIS was waiting on the steps when Ted came back. She had stood there ever since he left, unable to settle to anything.

"Have you got it?" she called.

He jumped off his horse, pulled the letter from his pocket and handed it to her.

"Amaryllis," he said gravely, "I've done this for you. I want you to do something for me—promise never to write to that fellow Lusonby again."

Amaryllis pouted.

"Silly boy! You are so jealous—aren't you? I must just write him one little line. We've been designing a dress together, and he's getting Stéphanie to make it. All the day I've been trying to decide if I'd have red or green; at last I decided on red, and then when I'd posted the letter I knew all the time it ought to be green. Was old Andrew civil to you, or did he grumble much?"

"Oh—er—quite civil," answered Ted. "I say, could I have the car to take me to the station? I'll have to go back to London to-night after all."

Eight notable short stories in December

The Return of Sledger — By T. S. Stribling
Often even chance is ruled by those strong enough to live. Something big, vital

Yellow — By William Almon Wolff
Good reading plus that something that will set you to examining yourself

The Trail of the Chitigau — By Ruth Burr Sanborn
Sprightly humor and proof that talking is not always—but never mind

Values — By I. A. R. Wylie
A man who assumed the right to judge life itself. You've met him

The Hawk — By Arthur B. Reeve
Craig Kennedy, hunting small game, runs into a surprise

The Broken Nose — By Michael Arlen
The spirit that leads to true adventure

The Elopement — By Alexander Porterfield
A philanderer who stepped into the trap of his own futility

Strain — By Albert Richard Wetjen
A slice of sea life that you won't forget

December *EVERYBODY'S*—out November 15th

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A Story of Love, Greed and the Turf

THOROUGHBRED

The Web in Which Constance Lee and Jeffries Are Caught Binds Them More and More Deeply—Gabriel Casts Off Restraint

By Mrs. Wilson Woodrow

Author of "Swallowed Up"

Illustrations by O. F. Schmidt

Begin this serial with any instalment. The story is here up to this issue.

CINCINNATI, both from the viewpoint of Clifton and from that of Vine Street—local synonyms for the world of society and the world of sport—was stunned, staggered, flabbergasted.

At the Latonia race track, which, although across the river, Cincinnati holds as her own, there had been put through on the opening day of the summer meeting what was said to be the most colossal turf swindle ever perpetrated.

And the shock of the affair was not confined to Cincinnati alone. In New York, in Jersey City, in Baltimore, Washington, New Orleans, Louisville, Toronto and St. Louis—in every city where racing holds interest—the seismograph of public feeling registered almost as marked a disturbance.

Report following report from widely scattered sections showed that there had been a concerted and thoroughly organized raid against the pool-rooms of the entire country. Such a spoiling of the Egyptians had not taken place within the memory of the oldest race follower. It was estimated that the ring which had engineered the coup must have reaped a harvest well over a million dollars.

And then, to cap the climax of sensation, Judge Clay Jeffries, candidate for the United States Senate, and owner of a famous Bluegrass stock farm, was named as chief of the swindlers.

The Cincinnati evening papers carried the flaring headline, "Kentucky's Best Known Gentleman Sportsman Ruled Off at Latonia!" and told how, shortly after the conclusion of the questioned race, Judge Jeffries had been called to the judges' stand and confronted with the evidence against him. His colt, Sleighbells, in winning easily the Wideawake Stakes for two-year-olds had shown a startling reversal of form from all previous performances, and when the news began to filter in of tremendous winnings in the pool-rooms, and on top of this it was learned that Jeffries had backed his horse for ten thousand dollars at odds of twelve to one, the victory began to appear so suspicious that the track officials declared all bets off, and ordered an investigation. This ruling, however, since the pool-room winnings had already been paid, affected only the bets laid at the track, and practically but a single wager, that ten thousand dollars of Jeffries.

Rumors were now flying fast about the grounds, that a "ringer" had been substituted for the real Sleighbells; and a demand was sent to the stables for the colt to be produced. Instead, his trainer, Jim DeVries,

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appeared with a fishy story that immediately after the race Sleighbells had run away out of the gate and made off toward the hills.

This left the question uncertain; but unfortunately for the swindlers the judges summoned Ed Thornhill, a former trainer for Jeffries, who had handled Sleighbells up to within a few months previous, and who was known to be square as a die. Thornhill had watched the race from the infield rail, and when asked the point-blank question, reluctantly but positively stated that the winner of the Wideawake was not the colt he had raised and tended.

Jeffries, in his own defense, denied any knowledge of a fraud, but could offer no proof beyond his bare word. He haughtily refused to explain why he had wagered ten thousand dollars on a horse which, he acknowledged, he had not believed stood an outside chance.

So, on the face of the facts, the judges suspended Jeffries and DeVries from the track; and unless some more adequate defense was presented, the jockey club, it was certain, would formally rule both men off the turf.

A Jeffries of Beechlands ruled off! Why, from the old days of Iroquois and Longfellow, the Beechlands colors had flaunted proudly on every track in America, and always the Jeffries name had stood for all that was highest in sportsmanship.

Small wonder that a charge of cheating against one of that name should provoke an almost incredulous amazement. It was like the attainder of a Howard or a Percy in the days of the Plantagenets in England.

In the Bluegrass, as at Southampton and Newport, in drawing-rooms and clubs, on stable benches and in blind tigers, it was that night the one topic of conversation—a scandal of national scope.

And of all who discussed it, whether millionaire owner or colored swipe, tout or trainer, sporting editor or sporting *débutante*, there were few who did not subscribe to Jeffries's guilt. It was known that he was financially hard-pressed, in urgent need of money for his political campaign, and it was simply supposed that he had yielded to temptation—traded honor for ambition.

LISTENING to the buzz of excited comment all about him, Louis Beachey, the New York lawyer, stood in the lobby of the hotel at Cincinnati where he was stopping. Acquaintances paused now and then for a word or two with him; but while he talked his eyes were glancing beyond them, as if he sought some one he expected to appear.

At last, his heavy eyelids lifted slightly as he saw a tall, gangling young man come in, and he sauntered forward so as to intercept him without seeming to do so.

"Ah, Mr. Gabriel!" He held out his hand.

The other man was Perry Gabriel, a third-generation millionaire, in whom the morals, manners and sturdy physique of his ancestors had obviously gone to seed. He was in high spirits, if one could judge from the rather noisy badinage he was exchanging with a group of men near the door. But at the sight of Beachey, his face darkened; there was a touch of trepidation in his manner.

"The blind goddess has evidently been kind to you to-day," Beachey said, oblivious to these signs of disfavor. "I noticed you as you came in; you had all the swagger of a heavy winner."

"Sh-h!" Gabriel looked nervously over his shoulder. Then, assured that no one was within hearing distance, he permitted himself a sly grin.

"Well, we didn't do so badly," he answered, still cautious. "But that's no reason for broadcasting it all over the shop."

"Yes?" Beachey was blandly satirical. "Then don't gloat so openly. Your cue as a sportsman is one of Brutus-like regret over the downfall of Cæsar."

The razor-edge of his sarcasm passed over Gabriel's comprehension without leaving a nick. He chuckled complacently.

"We did bring down a bird we never expected; what? Who says you can't hit two with one stone?"

"The stone sometimes rebounds," Beachey observed. "In view of possible complications, I would suggest that you get in touch with DeVries without delay, and have him meet us in my rooms at—say, nine o'clock."

Gabriel scowled impatiently.

"Complications? That's apple-sauce. What are you talking about? Oh—I see!"—sneeringly. "You're afraid you're not going to get yours. Well, if you're so anxious, come into the writing-room and I'll give you a check right now."

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"Don't be a fool!" Beachey's voice for a moment lost its smoothness. "I always get mine. And I shall expect to see you and DeVries at nine o'clock."

As he strolled away, Gabriel flung a muttured anathema after his retreating figure. Nevertheless, nine o'clock saw him at Beachey's rooms on the sixth floor of the hotel; and shortly afterward, DeVries, a smaller man with a hard-bitten, weather-stained face, knocked at the door and slipped inside.

Beachey suavely waved them to seats, and in his character of host set out bottles and glasses on the table.

"Not for me," Gabriel curtly declined. "I didn't come to any party. What's the idea of all this, anyhow? Seems to me, the less we're around together, the better for all concerned."

DeVries gave a quick nod to indicate that this also expressed his sentiments.

"For the future, you are doubtless right," Beachey conceded. "But first, isn't it wise to take stock—consider the situation and all its possibilities—and map out a definite course of action? You will hardly deny that the unforeseen and drastic action of the officials in regard to Jeffries puts an entirely new complexion on the matter."

"Piece of damn' big luck, I call it." Gabriel changed his mind about refusing to drink, and reached for the bottle of Scotch on the table. "Gives us a clean bill of health."

"I am not so sure. Jeffries is not the man to rest quietly under such a stigma."

"What the hell can he do? He sewed his shroud when he made that crazy ten-thousand-dollar bet. It couldn't have fallen better for us if we'd planned it."

"Perhaps. But it's never wise to underestimate an adversary. Just to clear the ground, suppose we run over the points of the case. Correct me, if I err in any particular.

"TO BEGIN, then"—Beachey leaned back and joined the tips of his fingers in lawyer-like fashion—"our friend, DeVries here, happened to have under his charge this season two horses of singularly similar appearance, this two-year-colt, Sleighbells, of Judge Jeffries, and an older horse named Joybells belonging to Mrs. Constance Lee. The younger horse on his public appearance proved a disappointment, and as the elder horse was an uncertainty, there was no prospect of especial profit in handling them. Then an ingenious suggestion came to DeVries. If the elder horse could be substituted for Sleighbells in some two-year-old race, he could undoubtedly walk away from the field of youngsters; and if meantime Sleighbells were so manipulated as to insure long odds against him, the result would be a killing. There were no material difficulties in the way to a trainer of DeVries's experience; the only real obstacle was the possibility of interference on the part of the owners. And here, fortune favored our friend; for Mrs. Lee went to the mountains for a rest, and Judge Jeffries became absorbed in a political campaign. A financial backer was needed for the enterprise, however, and here the astute Mr. Gabriel——"

Gabriel, who had been twisting restlessly in his chair, gave an impatient exclamation.

"Oh, cut it short, Beachey!" he growled. "We pulled the deal in the Wideawake Stakes this afternoon, and cleaned up on it as we expected. And Jeffries is holding the bag. That's all there is to it."

"Pardon me; but it isn't." The lawyer shook his head. "You two surely do not imagine that the matter will end here? There is bound to be a searching investigation."

"We should worry!" DeVries broke in with a short laugh; it was the first time he had offered anything to the discussion. "Let 'em investigate. Why, there was a flock of reporters out at my training quarters at Oakley before I came away. All they could find was Sleighbells—the real Sleighbells—winded and a little lame in his stall after a hard run—all the way from Latonia." He winked.

"But what had become of the—er—counterfeit Sleighbells?" inquired Beachey. "The horse with filed-off teeth and a dyed coat?"

"Don't know anything about such a critter." DeVries grinned impudently. "Back in the Kentucky hills, at a place I know, there's an old skate that might answer your description. Later on, when the dye wears off, and this thing blows over, maybe I'll race him at outlaw tracks down in Mexico and South America. That's about all that's left to me now," he added a shade ruefully.

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"I see." Beachey nodded. "But that leaves a horse still to be accounted for—Mrs. Lee's Joybells?"

"Well, now, that's the unfortunate part of it," DeVries returned cheerfully. "This Joybells, you see, was shipped East a few days ago. Course, his looks had changed some, and he'd shrunk about a hand and a half in height. But"—again he winked—"the bill of lading said he was Joybells all right. Also, as I understand, he was injured so bad in unloading that he had to be shot. I'm expecting a telegram to-morrow to tell me that he's been cremated. Hard luck, ain't it?"

"You see," Gabriel spoke triumphantly, "our tracks are completely covered. Every loophole has been looked after."

"How about the stable-hands?" probed Beachey. "Some of them must know."

"Only old Uncle Ike and one or two others for certain." DeVries shrugged his shoulder. "And they'll keep a still tongue. Anyhow, who'd take the word of a lot of crazy niggers?"

"Besides," urged Gabriel, helping himself to another drink, "where does all this get any one? DeVries is already in as bad as they can put him. He's content with the rake-off he's got. And even if all the facts came out, how would it help to clear Jeffries?"

The lawyer thoughtfully pleated his long upper lip.

"Very pretty," he said. "But you forget that there are five credible witnesses who know that Judge Jeffries is absolutely innocent."

"Five witnesses?" Gabriel put down his glass with a thump.

"Five," reiterated Beachey, starting to check them off on his fingers. "First, there is myself——"

"You?" Gabriel and DeVries both jumped to their feet. "Why, you're in on the deal with us."

"Oh, no!" Beachey shook his head. "If you'll remember, I encountered you two by chance a few days ago, and asked you for some reliable racing information. You advised me to bet on Sleighbells in the Wide-awake Stakes, and offered to take a commission for me of twenty-five thousand dollars. That is all I know about it."

"Huh!" sneered Gabriel. "And who do you think will believe that choice little fairy story, when they find out that you have a whale of a cut in the plunder?"

"Ah?" Beachey smiled blandly. "But I have as yet received no cut. I declined a check when you offered it to me to-night. There is not the scratch of a pen between us, Gabriel."

GABRIEL, checkmated, seemed ready to fling himself at Beachey.

"You try any of your dirty double-crossing tricks on me, and you'll see where you land." He choked with rage. "We haven't stopped at anything to put this deal over."

Beachey rarely laughed outright, but he did so now—a gentle, mocking peal.

"If threats were efficacious with me, Gabriel, I'd have been out of business long ago. You need have no fear, though, that I intend to split; at least, not so long as it appears to my interest to keep silent. I was merely trying to indicate to you that your position is not so unassailable as you imagine. Also, I do not believe I will collect what you call my 'cut' just yet. You may hold it for me, Gabriel, until I send you my bill in due time—for legal services."

There being nothing that Gabriel could well reply to this, he sullenly poured himself another drink.

"And now," said Beachey resuming his counselor manner, "let us take up some of the other points of danger. This detective, Bell, who has been bobbing up in the last few days; what of him?"

"A numskull," Gabriel scoffed contemptuously. "A prize bonehead. He couldn't detect a piece of Limburger cheese. He was working for me until I fired him for incompetence, and he probably picked up some inkling of what was in the wind, and peddled the information to Constance Lee. But he doesn't really know anything; she bought a lemon."

"Possibly," pondered Beachey. "And yet what he had to tell induced Mrs. Lee, one of the least gullible persons I know, to risk a midnight journey through a raging flood in an effort to thwart your game. Perhaps"—with a significant glance at De Vries—"Mrs. Lee's maid, Delia, may have been able to corroborate this Bell in certain important particulars?"

The trainer wriggled under his scrutiny, but did not lose his poise.

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"That runs for the end book, your honor." He gave a short laugh. "I don't trust any skirt. Delia may have jumped to some conclusions; fact is, I guess she did. But outside of a few hints that I expected to make a killing—which might have meant whatever she wanted to think—she didn't have a thing. Anyhow, Delia's on our side; it was her that tipped us off about this Bell coming to see Mrs. Lee. I ain't had a chance to talk to her yet since she's reached town; but I'll lay a piece of change 'twasn't her gave anything away. She's never been an in-and-outer; you know that yourself."

Once more Gabriel reached for the Scotch, and poured himself a stiff drink.

"Hokum!" He waved the discussion aside with a supercilious gesture. "All hokum, Beachey. You know as well as I do that the whole thing sifts down to Connie Lee. Bell's her hired man, Delia's her maid; they'll do as she tells them. What's Connie's program? That's the question." His manner was challenging, insolently so. "You're her attorney. You ought to know."

"Mrs. Lee is in bed, under the care of a doctor and a nurse," returned Beachey coldly. "Quite overcome by her experiences. I have had no chance to consult her of course."

"Uh-huh. I heard she collapsed when she reached the race track." Gabriel squirted his glass full of soda and drained it; somehow he infused into the action an offensive skepticism.

Abruptly Beachey shifted the subject. He held himself rigidly calm.

"The crux of the whole problem," he said, "lies in the ten-thousand-dollar bet of Judge Jeffries."

"The ten-thousand-dollar bet?" Gabriel repeated thickly.

"Why, that's what cinched the case with the judges," contended DeVries.

"Exactly!"—with a contemptuous inflection. "But does either of you believe for a moment that a hard-boiled, experienced horseman like Clay Jeffries bet ten thousand dollars on a colt he confidently expected to lose? Oh, no! He placed that wager for some one else."

"Why didn't he say so then?"

"He wanted to see that person first, and obtain an explanation. For it could not fail to occur to him that the layer of the wager must have had advance information concerning the fraud. So Jeffries saw in it a direct line of information to the real backers of the affair. Query, then—and a highly important query to you two: Who got Jeffries to place that bet?"

DE VRIES and Gabriel looked at each other darkly. Here was an aspect to their enterprise that had not presented itself to them. A mutual suspicion began to glow in their eyes.

Suddenly Gabriel flung up his head. The whisky he had taken had sharpened rather than dulled a certain quality of cunning in his brain.

"You old fox!" He leered tipsily at Beachey. "You had me almost winging on that one, but not quite. Who got Jeffries to place that bet? As if you didn't know. Why, I, poor boob, thought all the time the Jeffries end of it was a lucky accident; and here you had deliberately planned it. Smooth. I've got to give you credit. No one but a crooked old hyena like you would ever have thought of it. Of course, Jeffries can't explain his bet. A Kentucky gentleman would never, never give away a woman. You and cute, little Connie, between you, simply made the poor devil dig his own grave."

Beachey was on his feet. His face was impassive, but his eyes were like burning coals.

"You're drunk," he said disdainfully.

Gabriel's elbow slipped, and he sprawled on the table.

"Maybe. But not so drunk that I can't see when I've scored. You've fenced with me a long time, old top; but at last I've learned how to get you. I'm a bit blotto, as you say; and I don't yet quite see how you were fixing to flim-flam DeVries and myself on the deal. But you had it in mind all right.

"Listen to me, though, you damn' blackmailer." He struggled up and pounded on the table, heedless of DeVries, who was vainly tugging at his sleeve to silence him. "Let you or Constance Lee make one funny move against me, just one; and, believe me, I'll get even. A few whispers—started no one knows where—and she won't dare show her face in New York. They'll remember how mum she's always kept about her beautiful past; and I'll give them her straight

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number—a reform-school rat, blackmailer, confidence woman."

Beachey's hands swung out and clutched the back of a chair. He half raised it; then, with iron control, lowered it to the floor again.

Gabriel, who had failed to note the menacing gesture, sagged back into his seat, his mood of drunken bluster subsiding.

"'S all right, DeVries." He pushed the trainer away from him. "Lil plain speaking never hurt anybody. Beachey's a crooked dog, but he's a good fellow. And so are we—all crooked dogs and good fellows together." He cocked his eyes jovially at the lawyer. "C'mon now, old double-crosser; cards on the table; open covenants openly 'rived at. I got you where I want you. Don't need to give you a damn' cent. Jeffries is sewed up, you're sewed up, Connie and Bell and Delia all sewed up. P. Gabriel, Esquire, on top. But P. Gabriel's a good sport. He don't welch on a fair and square agreement." He flung out his check-book on the table. "Give you your winnings right now."

Beachey leaned over, and closing the check-book, handed it back to him. When he spoke, his voice was as evenly modulated as ever; but there was a tang to it, like the dry whir of the rattlesnake before it strikes.

"I thank you, Mr. Gabriel. But any sort of association with you is something that no amount of money could recompense. Never fear, though, that you will evade payment of your obligation to me. You have called me a damned blackmailer; it will amuse me to demonstrate to you what blackmail really means.

"And now, gentlemen"—he stepped to the door and held it open—"I am afraid that you must excuse me. It is growing late, and I have a very important brief to go over. So I shall have to bid you good night."

After they had gone, however, he did not take any of the papers from his brief bag. Instead, he sat far into the night, with folded arms and bent head—thinking, thinking.

IT WAS not until the third day after Mrs. Lee's collapse that afternoon at Latonia, that she was permitted to sit up; and, although her doctor wished to bar all visitors for a few days longer, she insisted on sending at once for John Bell, the private detective who had brought her news of the projected racing swindle, and had shared her adventurous, if unavailing, journey to prevent it.

Her hotel sitting-room, when Bell entered it, looked and smelled like a rose garden, so filled was it with her favorite flowers. She was lying on a couch heaped with rose-colored pillows, and a rose silk coverlet was drawn over the laces of her negligee. But the reflected glow could not disguise her pallor.

It might have been the effect of the sooty Cincinnati sunlight struggling in at the open windows; but it seemed to him as if something vivid and invincible had gone from her beauty. Bell hardly expressed it so to himself, but it was as if the waters mental and material through which she had passed had swept away that aura of radiance which was so great a part of her charm.

She held out her hand to him and smiled, a smile with shadows of irony, self-reproach and weariness in it.

"Why don't you say I-told-you-so, Mr. Bell? You are thinking it, I know. Oh, I should have taken your advice and telegraphed to the track officials, instead of being so darned obstinate and self-sufficient, and trying to do it all myself. I thought I could avoid publicity and notoriety, and I've only succeeded in getting about all there is."

Bell sat down awkwardly, holding his derby hat on his knees.

"Well," he tried to be consoling, "you did everything you could. Ain't many would have taken the chances you did."

"But I failed." There was a little break in her voice; then a glimmer of the old fighting spirit came back to her eyes. "Never mind, though. That's behind us. We're not beaten yet; we're going on with the matter just the same. And the first thing, of course, is to have this absurd decision against Judge Jeffries reversed. That's why I wanted to see you without delay. You must go before the judges, and tell them the facts—the same story you told me."

"I've thought of that." Bell looked troubled. "But I doubt whether it wouldn't do more harm than good. You see, I'd have to admit that Perry Gabriel had fired

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me, and the word of a private detective with a grudge to pay off ain't going to carry much weight. Gabriel would say that Jeffries had hired me to trump up a case against him; and most people would believe it. Also, for he's a dirty cur, he might drag you into it, tell how he'd employed me to investigate you as a blackmailer."

"But we can't stop, because of anything Perry Gabriel may say," she returned quickly.

"Nor we can't go ahead, without some better evidence than just my say-so," answered Bell gloomily.

"Haven't you the testimony of that darky swipe, the one who told you about DeVries's preparation to interchange the horses?"

"A coke fiend? Even if he'd stick to his story, who'd take any stock in it? Besides, that don't help Judge Jeffries any; nor it don't get us any closer to Gabriel. It only goes to show that DeVries used a ringer, and that's already proved by Thornhill."

"But at any rate you have Delia," she contended.

"Yes; we have Delia. She's not anywhere around, is she?" Bell dropped his voice at the question; then, reassured by a shake of the head, went on. "But the trouble with her is much the same. It doesn't hook up the deal to Gabriel. I pumped her pretty thoroughly on our trip down from Portsmouth, and most of what she's got is guess-work and putting two and two together. DeVries was mighty cagey about what he let out to her, strong on glittering generalities.

"Anyhow," he questioned, "just how far is Delia to be trusted? Do you know whether she has seen DeVries, or not?"

"Not yet, I am sure. He has called her on the telephone several times, but she has refused to leave me even for a minute, until this afternoon when I persuaded her to go out with the nurse."

"Well," Bell reflected, "there's no use saying she wasn't crazy about DeVries; because she was, even to the extent of throwing you. Course, she's mad at him now; but question is, how long will it last? He may get around her again, and——"

"No; I don't think so," Constance dissented. "She talked to me very freely last night, and just now at least she is convinced that Gabriel and DeVries meant to murder me—she turned. She has a sort of horror of DeVries now, and she also has an idea that he has been merely using her, and will, as she expresses it, shake her at the first opportunity."

science-stricken. My narrow escape when the dam was blown up seems to have opened her eyes to DeVries's true character. The affair between them began, you see, just about the time that Perry Gabriel imagined he was in love with me. Delia detested Gabriel, and, I suppose, talked a good deal about him to DeVries. Something, some conversation she had overheard, gave De Vries the idea of blackmailing Gabriel, and he induced her to eavesdrop every time Gabriel came to my apartment. She fell in with his plans readily enough—Delia, I am afraid, is fundamentally unmoral—but I don't think she ever profited much from it, and she seems never to have imagined that I would be involved in any way.

"She believed, though, that she would gain tremendous advantages from this ringer scheme, and she would probably have gone on aiding DeVries in it, if it had not been for the bursting of the dam. But when she saw the ruin that caused, and realized the danger to me—she is con-

"She's not far wrong on that, I guess," Bell observed dryly. "DeVries has got another girl all right, playing her hard. A blonde chicken from over in Covington."

"No?" Constance showed excitement. "Can you prove that to Delia?"

"Easy. All she's got to do is to go out with me most any afternoon. I know where the two of 'em meet."

"She shall go. That takes a load off my mind, Mr. Bell. Delia will never forgive DeVries now."

"Well, I'm glad I'm of some use," Bell smiled wryly. "I like to feel that I'm doing something to earn my money. But, as I tell you, Mrs. Lee, it isn't Delia that's the key to this thing, although we may be able to use her.

"NOW, I may be all wrong," he squinted down thoughtfully at the hat in his lap, "but I've got a hunch that it'll pay us to go a little slow on this case. We don't want to jump in before we've got it cinched up to Gabriel. And to my mind, there's just three ways to get what we're after.

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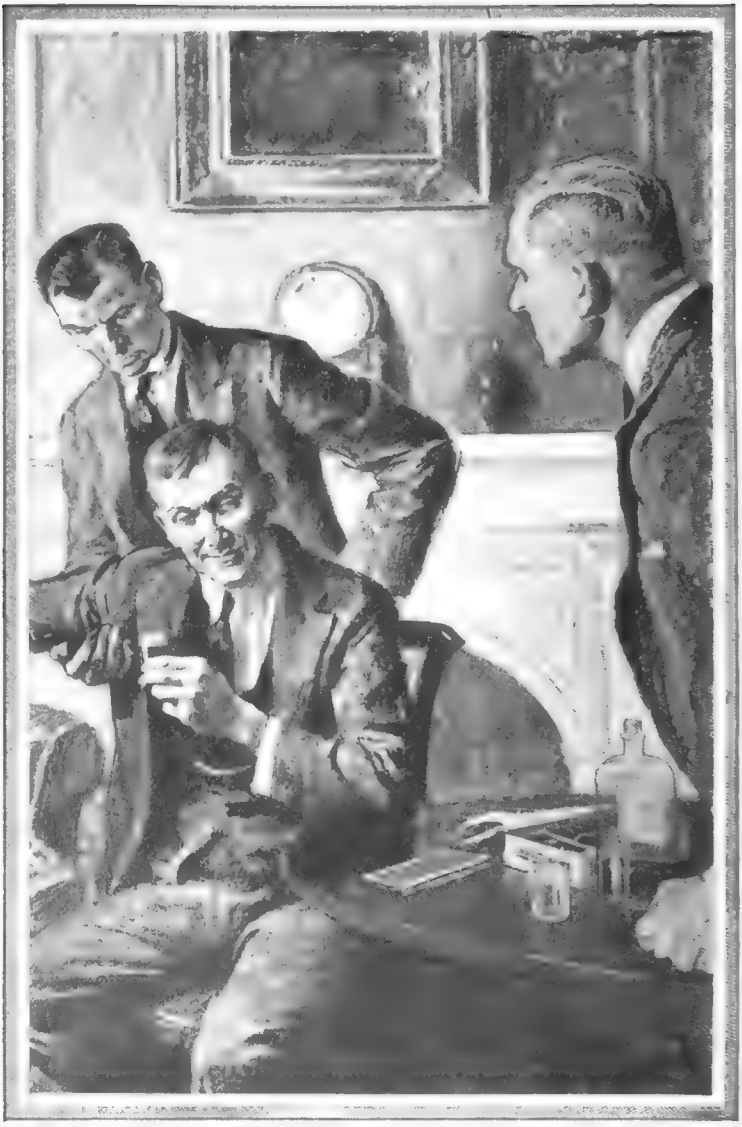

"'S all right, DeVries. Lil plain speaking never hurt anybody. Beachey's a crooked dog, but he's a good fellow."

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"One is through DeVries. Oh, I know"—as he saw her face fall at the suggestion—"it don't sound very promising. DeVries has got a wad of money, which is all he was after. It doesn't make very much difference to him whether Jeffries or Gabriel is tarred; he's done for, so far as racing in America is concerned, whichever way the cat jumps. You think, under the circumstances, it'd be pretty hard to pry any information out of him, and that's true. But there's always a loose end or so in a thing of this sort, and I believe I've got hold of one.

"Now DeVries claims, I hear, that your horse Joybells was shipped East three days before the race, and injured so in unloading that he was shot and afterward cremated. But we know of course that Joybells was never shipped East at all. He was used as a ringer for Sleighbells in the Wideawake, and it was him you saw doing that fake runaway out of the grounds. The stable-boy that was on him was supposed after a long run to have controlled him and brought him in as Sleighbells to the training quarters at Oakley. What really happened of course is, that the stable-boy changed mounts; for it was certainly the genuine Sleighbells that was rode in, blown and tired, at Oakley.

"The question then is, what became of Joybells? If he was taken off in the woods somewhere and killed, then we're up against it. But if he was merely hidden back in the hills, he can be found; and with Joybells located, we've got a clear case against Mr. DeVries, both for horse-stealing and conspiracy to defraud. And faced with a sure trip to State's Prison, I have an idea that he'll squeal, turn State's evidence against Gabriel, and blow the whole works."

"But you may spend weeks searching for the horse," Constance objected, "with the chance of it ending in nothing. DeVries would never risk sparing such obvious proof of his rascality. No"—her lip quivered—"I am sure that my poor Joybells has been sacrificed."

"More'n likely you're right," Bell admitted. "Still you never can tell. Crooks make surprising slips at times. Anyhow, I've thought it worth while to put out a man to comb over these hill farms, on the chance of turning up something. Meantime, there's nothing to prevent us from following up the other leads."

"What other leads?" she asked.

"Well—Gabriel, for instance."

"Gabriel? You don't dream you can get anything out of him?"

"You never can tell," he repeated. "What I had in mind is really the same move I planned in regard to DeVries, only with the reverse English on it. Gabriel was awful sore, remember, about being blackmailed. Now, if through Delia we can show him that DeVries was the one who gypped him, won't he try to get even? At any rate, with the two of 'em scrapping, something's pretty sure to come out."

She considered this a moment, then shook her head.

"It wouldn't be vital enough with him now," she argued. "He has more than recouped his losses through the blackmail; and with that made good, he would—if I am any judge of Perry Gabriel's psychology—be more apt to admire DeVries's cleverness than to condemn him."

"Then I guess I'm done." Bell slumped dejectedly in his chair. "There's only one other person that can prove the facts, and it would be like digging it out of a stone wall to try and tap him. That's Beachey."

SHE started, and drew her lower lip in against her teeth.

"Beachey!"

"Sure. He's wise to every turn that's been made. But don't bank anything on that, Mrs. Lee. Beachey got a fat slice out of the clean-up; never think he's going to chuck it away. And, anyhow," he hesitated, with a diffident glance at her, "well, I don't believe he's losing much sleep over seeing Judge Jeffries in the hole, or that he'd stir a finger to help him out. 'Twouldn't be natural."

She flushed at his intimation of the rivalry between the two men; nevertheless, Bell's words had started a new train of thought. She became abstracted, absorbed in following it; so much so, that for a time she seemed to forget the detective's presence.

"Don't be so down-hearted, Mr. Bell." Her remembrance of him was perfunctory. "As you say, one never can tell. By the way, I wish you would find out whether Mr. Beachey is in the hotel." She motioned toward the telephone. "And, if he is, ask him to come here to me."

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WITHIN five minutes Beachey was at her door. Bell had already gone out, and she received him alone. As he advanced into the room, with that ever vivid recollection in his mind of the evening he had spent with her in the mountains, he was shocked at the change in her. He felt a surge of anger, primitive and unreasonable, against Gabriel.

"Constance! My dear! My dear!" he murmured, his voice breaking as he held her hand to his lips. "These last two days have been haunted ones. I have been able to think of nothing but you."

"You've been so good, so untiring in your inquiries. And I have to thank you for all these." She loosened her hand, and waved it toward the vases and bowls of roses about the room. "I have been very anxious to see you. There is so much I want to talk to you about."

"Let that wait. Get well first, before you bother your head over anything. Meanwhile, your interests are all being looked after."

"But it isn't business that I want to discuss with you," she said. "Nor even this loathsome turf scandal, except incidentally. It is about—myself and you."

He was sitting beside her couch, his eyes on her face; but she seemed to find it hard to begin. A slow wave of color flooded up into her pale cheeks, her eyes involuntarily turned away from him.

Beachey's own face was inscrutable; but he was watching, studying her as he had often studied a witness in the courtroom, noting each slightest change of expression.

As he watched, a line gradually creased his forehead, and his veiled eyes dulled with pain.

At last he leaned toward her, and spoke very gently.

"Perhaps I can help you, Constance. You want to tell me, don't you, that it is not me you care for, as I have been hoping and dreaming, but—Jeffries?"

She put her hand over her eyes, pressing her temples.

"How did you know?" she asked in a muffled voice.

"Ah, how?" He gave a short, dreary laugh. "I think, subconsciously, I have known it from the first. But I would not admit it. I gambled on the tie of our long association, perhaps of my fancied influence over you. It was Gabriel, though"—he spoke the name with icy rancor—"who brought me to my senses."

"How? What do you mean?"

"He pointed out to me that you must have been the one for whom Jeffries placed that ten-thousand-dollar bet. Odd, that so obvious a solution never occurred to me. But it struck me like a thunderbolt. No chance, I suppose"—leaning nearer, with a quick intake of the breath—"that I was mistaken?"

She shook her head.

"It was my money," she said. "That can be proved by the check. I sent it to him two days before the race, in order to—but I will take that up later. I want first to tell you how abased I am, how ashamed. That night up in the mountains I was—acting. My heart was not in it. I had overheard your talk with Delia, I was angry with you when I found out that you had been using her to spy on me; angrier still when you burned my letters. I lost all my belief in you then, and I was determined to find out if you had deceived me about Jeffries, about his espionage on me. I saw only one way to do it; to get you off your guard, to pretend that I cared. But although I discovered what I wanted to know, I have been in the depths of humiliation ever since."

BEACHEY sat perfectly still.

"You do not surprise me," he said finally. "That night, I believed you—man's natural vanity, I suppose—and yet the very next day found me——" He paused as if recollecting himself.

"I know," she interrupted. "You were going to say, we are quits when it comes to deception. But I can't look at it that way. I think I know the worst of you, Louis, and I will not say that the revelation did not shock and hurt me. But perhaps, if I had always been absolutely straight and candid with you, you would have been the same with me.

"So I sent for you to-day, deciding to throw away all reserves, and tell you exactly where I stand. I do love Clay Jeffries. I have loved him ever since we met at Atlantic City, I always shall love him. But even at that, I could not let go the old, old hatred. I made a vow that I would break him, and"—she shuddered—"that wicked

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vow stood. In spite of everything I could do, in spite of all my efforts, that vow stood. This turf scandal is all my fault, and I've got to clear him. I've got to. And I'm begging your help. I can't do it alone. You are the one person who can go to the judges, and tell them exactly what happened. You know all the details; you were associated with Gabriel and DeVries in this scheme."

Beachey was taken by surprise; but his schooled nerves did not betray it by even a quiver.

"Where did you get that idea?" he asked evenly.

"My detective, Bell, told me. When you talked to Gabriel and DeVries in the lobby of the hotel and demanded a share in their takings, he was behind a pillar listening to all that was said. Then he came to me up in the mountains."

"Bell!" His lip curled. "Hardly a credible witness. As Gabriel's discharged employee, his motives are open to question."

"But you know he is telling the truth. Oh, can't you understand? I am not threatening; I realize you are too well intrenched to be reached. I am not arguing with the lawyer. I am appealing to the man."

It was his habit to fence, to draw out an opponent, and he couldn't change even in a moment of emotion.

"What do you wish me to do?" he asked noncommittally.

"The great, the generous thing," she implored. "Go to the jockey club, and tell them the whole story. Then, with my evidence, and that of Bell and Delia to corroborate you, they cannot help but be convinced. You will do it, Louis, won't you?"

As he listened to her impassioned pleading, he knew that he could not refuse her. She had been his life's one weakness, and now she was to be his life's frustration. He would yield to her, he knew that; and yet he chose to consider.

Reaching over to the stand at the head of her couch, he took up a vinaigrette, which lay there, and turned it over and over in his hands with his characteristic gesture.

A faint cynical gleam came into his eyes, as he reflected on the inherent cruelty of women where their affections are concerned. No man, realizing what this meant to him—social and professional oblivion, the triumph of a rival, shipwreck to all his hopes and ambitions—would have dreamed of asking such a sacrifice. And yet she, giving nothing in return, was exacting it—because he loved her.

THE silence lengthened, and still he sat meditating, turning things over in his mind as he turned over the vinaigrette in his fingers. He thought of his own humble beginnings, of the mountain cabin where he was born, the fight he had made against ignorance and poverty to gain an education, the harder fight to achieve a place in the world. There had been lions in his path; and since he lacked the weapons of popularity or influence or wealth to overcome them, he had been compelled to use artifice and strategy. People called him mercenary and unscrupulous; but he had never encountered flawless integrity among those who criticized him. And nothing discreditable had ever been *proved* against him. He was too shrewd to be caught.

And then he recalled how Constance Lee had come into his life of dark corners and tortuous subterfuges like a ray of sunlight in a miser's attic. He thought of how he had taken up her rickety, unsubstantial case and fought it through court after court; of the many sleepless nights he had spent in studying its angles, of the shifts and ruses he had employed, of the legal thimble-rigging he had done. Any other attorney would have given up long ago in disgust. He had held on, constantly misrepresenting the facts to her, putting a good face on failure, bearing the whole burden. He wanted her more than anything else on earth, more than wealth, or fame, or honor. And now, when victory was theirs, when Jeffries had conceded more than he had ever hoped to gain, he found that she was lost to him. More; she was asking him, because he loved her, to sacrifice all that he had struggled to obtain—the fruits of all his years of toil and self-denial, of forethought and scheming—and go back to the world, beggared of character and prestige. A heavy price to pay for a broken heart.

He knew that he would accede to her request, that for her sake he must exonerate Jeffries; but he never for a moment contemplated going to the lengths that she proposed. Every man according to his talents; and the method of accomplishing

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her purpose that he worked out was distinctly Beacheyan—indirect, self-protective, subtly aimed to kill two birds with one stone.

Nearly half an hour passed before he lifted his long, saturnine face which had been bent broodingly on his chest, and restored the vinaigrette precisely to the table.

"I think, Constance," he said, "I can suggest an even more effective way of gaining the end you seek. The proper person to go before the jockey club and establish Judge Jeffries's innocence is not myself, but Gabriel."

She drew back, hurt to the core, tears flashing in her eyes at what she regarded as ridicule of her intercession.

"I mean it," he said seriously before she could speak. "Unless I am greatly mistaken, Gabriel can be persuaded to do that very thing. You forget, my dear, that there are several angles to this affair, and one of them, by no means unimportant, is the very suspicious bursting of that dam in the mountains. If Gabriel's responsibility for that can be verified, he faces a charge so serious that neither his money nor influence will save him."

"But Bell says it would be impossible to bring that home to Gabriel. He says detectives could be planted there for years and never find out anything. The mountain people simply will not talk."

"That is true, so far as outsiders are concerned. But I am not an outsider. They still consider me as one of themselves. I will guarantee that I can go up there, and within two days have evidence that I can follow right back to Gabriel. I had already debated making such an investigation on my own account, but decided against it." He neglected to state that his object had been to shake down Gabriel on the strength of the information he secured.

"Now, however, I shall undertake the matter," he told her. "And, as I say, I think when Mr. Gabriel has to choose between a criminal prosecution and making a clean breast to the jockey club, he will accept the lesser alternative.

"Have no more anxiety, my dear." He rose as composedly as if he were concluding one of their ordinary conferences in his office. "I shall be back from the Cumberlands day after to-morrow, ready, I am sure, to push the affair to a speedy and satisfactory conclusion."

He bowed over her hand in his ceremonious way, and left the room.

Once more he had neglected to mention a detail to her—that in essaying this quest among the mountaineers he was taking his life in his hands.

AFTER her talk with Beachey, it seemed to Constance that she had gained a fresh lease on life. She had felt so stained, so degraded by having any part in this sordid, disreputable scandal; and now with the lawyer on her side, with him to help her unravel these dark and tangled skeins, the way began to clear before her.

She could not think of Beachey without an admiration and gratitude so poignant that it made her heart ache. It seemed to her unjust, even cruel, that the splendor of his sacrifice should go unrewarded. When Lucifer could rise to the heights of Michael, putting from him both his jealousy of Jeffries and his passion for her, she reproached, almost hated, herself that she could not give him the only recompense that would mean anything to him—her love.

Two days later, as she, wandering restlessly about her sitting-room, bent to inhale the fragrance of his roses, the tears filled her eyes and dropped down on the crimson petals. The old romancers wove stories of knights in shining mail, fighting dragons and rescuing hapless maidens; but was there ever one who had done so great and gracious a deed as Louis Beachey? She wasn't worthy of it. If only she could have cared for him as he cared for her!

She moved over to the window, and stood looking down through the smoky, écru sunlight at the dingy Cincinnati street, her mind filled with memories. And, in spite of her regret, before she was aware of it Jeffries had replaced Beachey in her thoughts.

She saw him smoothing back that obstinate lock of hair over his forehead, and smiling at her, the smile that had always quickened the beating of her heart. Then she rubbed her hand across her eyes and sighed, remembering that she had not heard a word from him or of him since the race. He had not even inquired for her during her illness.

Bell had told her that he was at Beechlands, and the newspapers corroborated

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this; but the understanding was that he was in strict seclusion, seeing no one.

Her lips compressed, her head tilted upward. Well, after he had been exonerated from these hideous charges through her and Beachey's efforts, she would not see him. She would evade his attempts to thank her by simply being out of reach.

There was a quick knock on the door, and Delia came in.

"Something lovely has happened, Mrs. Lee. Who do you think is here?"

Before Constance could answer, Nannie Wendell was in the room, and in another moment Constance had her arms about her.

"Oh, Nannie!" she cried. "You treasure, to come!"

"It's just by a narrow little squeak, that I'm not here to your funeral," Nannie said sternly. She caught Constance by the arm and shook her, and then hugged her. "Crazy little fool! You nearly finished yourself, and me too. I had heart failure when I saw the papers."

Constance's lip trembled. She was still weak.

"Nannie, you mustn't blame me. You'd have done the same thing under the circumstances."

"I would not," said Nannie, with a shudder. "It starts gooseflesh all over me just to think of it. But Connie, darling! You've been ill. Lie down here on the couch, and then if you want to, you can tell me all about—everything.

"First, I must get the straight of this mess Clay is in. I hope I'll live to see those track judges hanged. The idea of their accusing Clay Jeffries of substituting a ringer, and in his own state too! It's a wonder they haven't been shot. I've boiled and seethed so all the way out, that I am surprised I have a whole skin. Have you seen him?"

"No." Constance's voice was low and tired. "I think—I am sure, he suspects me of having something to do with it. You know, DeVries was my trainer."

"Constance! Clay would never—oh, you only imagine that. This has been a terrible blow to him of course, and he's probably moving heaven and earth to clear the thing up. He hasn't thought of anything else. That's all."

"Nannie"—Constance caught her wrist, and looked at her with tortured eyes—"you don't understand. Under all the circumstances, it would be strange if he didn't suspect me. It's an idea that's been forcing itself on me ever since yesterday.

"You've been a splendid friend, Nannie; you've always known, I think, there were things in my life that I was sensitive about, that I couldn't discuss. And you've never asked me any questions. Ever since you and I worked together in the French hospitals, you've been wonderful to me. But it isn't fair to you, for me not to tell you now all the things about myself that you should know. And then you can decide whether you want to keep up our friendship, or not. No"—as Nannie began to protest—"listen to me first. I am going back, and start at the beginning."

She told her story without any reservations, describing her childhood, her three years at the reform school, her adoption by Woodson Logan, his interest and pride in her, the time she spent in school at Paris, her meeting with Captain Norman Lee during the war, and her marriage to him just before he died in the hospital. Then, still unfalteringly, she took up the later narrative; the contention over the coal lands, her reasons for going to Atlantic City, and all the details of the events as they unfolded themselves after that visit.

NANNIE listened with mixed emotions. It was incredible to her that Constance should once have believed Jeffries capable of the motives she had attributed to him; and yet she was able to understand it in a way—a deep-seated resentment and antagonism warring against a later attraction. In the end, her sympathies veered to Constance.

The whole situation was a dramatic one, and Nannie adored drama. She loved to play the part of the god from the machine, and here was an opportunity, inviting her to exercise her powers to the limit.

So, when she left Constance to rest and sleep, she immediately telephoned to Beechlands, and asked to speak to Judge Jeffries.

"Hello, Clay!" she said, when she heard his voice over the wire. "I just got into Cincinnati this morning, and I'm coming to Beechlands on the next train. You'll be at home, won't you?"

"Of course—to you. But you only."

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He paused a moment; then added: "The car will be at the station to meet you."

WHEN Mrs. Wendell reached the old house that afternoon, Jeffries came down the steps to greet her. His head was carried a little higher than usual, and she thought he looked haggard as if from sleepless nights; but his manner was unchanged.

He had ordered tea served on the lawn; and after she had poured it, he turned to her with a twisted smile.

"Well, I suppose you have come to offer your cousinly condolences?"

She saw that she must go warily. The wound was too deep and too raw to bear anything but the lightest touch.

"Did you think I'd stay at home, when the old squire was in trouble?" she asked, but the flippancy of the speech was softened by real feeling. "The thing is so ridiculous. Of course the jockey club will straighten it out at once; but it's outrageous that it should have happened to you, of all people."

As he still smiled, she noticed the deep lines about his mouth and eyes.

"Job had nothing on me," he said. "I've had everything but the boils, and I don't know that they wouldn't have been a relief. What rankles"—his face grew hard and set—"is that a cheap crew like that should actually have succeeded in putting it across. My self-respect is gone forever. I knew De Vries, and yet I played their game and put my horse into his hands. It's not hard now to guess why Joybells was purchased. The pieces of the whole puzzle all fit so perfectly together that, in looking back, I think I must have been blind not to see through it before. The most charitable thing I can say of myself is, that ever since that memorable visit to Atlantic City I have been insane. Well"—straightening his shoulders—"I am in my right mind now. Perhaps this last straw isn't too great a price to pay for that. And yet, considering all things, that combination would have been hard to beat, DeVries, Beachey—and Mrs. Lee."

"Clay!" Nannie drew back. "You certainly do not class Constance with those crooks."

His eyebrows went up superciliously.

"You, too!" His rallying tone was bitterly satirical. "I thought you prided yourself on being hard-boiled. Unfortunately I am a lawyer, trained to see the value of facts and to accept them when they are incontestable. Mrs. Lee chose DeVries as her trainer, and Beachey as her lawyer."

Two spots of scarlet showed on Nannie's cheeks.

"I think, old dear," she said tartly, "that you put the cart before the horse, when you said that you had been crazy, and were now sane. It's the other way around. I've been with Constance all morning; she has told me the whole story from beginning to end. And I assure you, she is quite as much in the net as you are. She is just recovering from that frightful journey. Why, Clay, think of the risks she ran, in order to get there in time to prevent that race!"

"And arrived opportunely just too late to do so," he commented. "Did she make it clear to you, Nannie, why, when she talked to me over the telephone, she did not inform me of a scheme which so vitally concerned me? And, also, why she did not telegraph the track officials?"

"She reproaches herself continually for that. But she never dreamed that she would not get there in time herself."

"Pretty weak," Jeffries remarked. He leaned his chin on his hand, and looked at his cousin. If she had known it, he was beginning one of those gentle but searching cross-examinations for which he was famous. "How did she, up there in the Cumberlands, learn of this scheme?"

"A detective, a man named Bell, came up post-haste and told her of it. It seems that Perry Gabriel—vile cur—had hired this man to prove that Constance was a blackmailer, and then threw him out because he couldn't do it. Constance, a blackmailer! Can you imagine such a thing?"

"Oh, yes! My imagination is able to compass even that," Jeffries said coolly. "H'm! It's quite ingenious. I remember this Bell very well. He was Gabriel's bodyguard on one occasion, and not a particularly efficient one." There was a reminiscent satisfaction in his voice. "He's worthy of the rest. It's really an excellent organization of thieves."

"Oh!" Nannie was almost in tears. "You are horrible. No matter what these other people have done, Constance had nothing to do with it; nothing."

"Nothing? Nothing perhaps, except to take her share of the winnings. Well, ladies must live. And lovely ladies have expensive tastes."

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She put down her teacup with a clatter.

"You twist everything I say into an indictment of Constance; and she is moving heaven and earth to help you. It was De Vries and Perry Gabriel who put the whole thing through, I tell you."

"Perry Gabriel!" He stopped with a lighted match half-way to his cigarette, and held it so until the flame burned his fingers. "I wonder if it's true, or just another trick of theirs? Nannie, you've brought me news—something to think about."

"But it is true," Nannie insisted vehemently. "Constance has evidence to prove it. She told me all about it, but there was so much, it's mixed up in my mind. She is only waiting now for a few fresh links to make the chain complete. When she gets those, she is going to the jockey club with the whole story."

Jeffries's face grew livid with anger. He banged his clenched hands down on the arms of his chair. It was a moment or two before he could speak.

"Mrs. Lee," he said, "must be made to understand that she will not be permitted to interfere in my affairs. I see her going before the jockey club with her evidence. Evidence! Arranged by Beachey, designed on the surface to be in my favor, but for that reason all the more damning. The last audacious move of the cleverest gang in the country.

"Nannie"—sternly—"you must cut off all association with those people at once. You must leave that hotel in Cincinnati, their headquarters, and stay here. My housekeeper will make you comfortable. If you do not, I shall wire at once to Hugo to come on and take you home."

"If you do, I shall never forgive you," she cried stormily. "You insist on managing your own affairs without interference; then kindly let me manage mine. I haven't asked either your advice or intervention. I came here full of indignation for the way you have been treated, my heart bleeding for you. But since I've talked to you, I don't wonder that Connie thought you hard and cruel. I don't wonder that she cherished a grudge against you for years, and felt as she did before she met you."

He was looking at her as if startled by what she said. There was an odd, questioning expression on her face.

"Oh, sit down, Nannie, and behave." He held out his cigarette case to her. "Take one of these, and calm your nerves. What you have told me interests me. So Mrs. Lee has held a grudge against me for years? On account of my claim on the coal property, I suppose?"

"No; something quite different, more personal."

He knitted his brows.

"Something more personal?" he repeated. "That's nonsense. Unless she holds some fancied grievance, it's trumped up. Do you know the nature of this imaginary wrong I've done the lady?"

"Yes, I do," she said defiantly; "and it's not at all imaginary. It's very real. But I promised I would not tell you."

He looked at her gravely.

"Do you think it fair, under the circumstances and considering the situation I am in, to hold to that promise?"

"I must." She twisted her hands. "It's because it's so personal, so entirely between you and herself, that I don't dare rush in where any self-respecting angel would fear to tread. Oh, Clay!"—in utter exasperation. "You fool! You idiot! You're so bitter against her now, because you were so much in love with her. And she, poor moron, is just as much in love with you. I tell you, she's as innocent as you are. She's just as much the victim of those low wretches, De Vries and Gabriel. If you would only go over to Cincinnati, she would see you gladly, and tell you all she knows. Then you could take the evidence before the jockey club, and be cleared at once."

"EASY, isn't it?" His smile mocked her. "I hope you get the sweet picture clearly. I say: 'Gentlemen, I am innocent. I shoulder the blame onto the lady, who may be able to prove to you that neither she nor I had any connection with the affair.' Can't you see the newspaper headlines, Nannie?

"No!"—emphatically. "I've never shielded myself behind a petticoat yet, and I don't mean to begin now. Not that I believe her testimony would do anything but deepen the fog. My course is clear. I shall go before the jockey club and accuse DeVries—Gabriel, too, if I can find any foundation for this story of yours. Then the club may take any action it sees fit. If the decision is against me—and it probably will be—I shall retire here and devote myself to farming.

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Politically, professionally and socially I shall be dead; for I will not put my friends in the embarrassing position of determining whether or not they care to recognize me."

"Of all——" One could almost hear the grind of the brakes Nannie put on her voluble tongue. "Oh!" She expelled the word with a heave of her chest. "Play the martyr. Do. Meekly accept the disgrace. Let your family and friends go to the devil. They don't mean anything to you of course. Refuse all the aid that's offered, and sulk in this old tent until kingdom come. Well, I have some fighting blood in me, if you haven't, and I'm going to see this thing through. Clay, for heaven's sake, I'm begging, I'm imploring you to——"

The torrent was interrupted by a servant who crossed the lawn, and said to Jeffries:

"Dey's some one on de 'phone fo' you, Judge."

"Who is it?" Jeffries asked.

"Didn't give no name. Jest said, he wanted to speak to you."

"Excuse me, Nannie." Clay went into the house.

"Hello!" he said, putting the telephone receiver to his ear.

"This is Mr. Beachey, Judge Jeffries," came the answer. "I would like to see you as soon as you can make it convenient."

"Quite impossible"—with curt finality.

"I am representing Mrs. Lee." Beachey's unruffled voice was punctiliously formal. "She has requested me to lay certain facts before you. I think you will find it to your interest to learn them."

There was a second's pause before Jeffries replied.

"Then perhaps Mrs. Lee will consent to present those facts to me herself. I can go to her hotel on Saturday, or if she prefers to come here to-morrow, I will be at home. My cousin, Mrs. Wendell, is stopping with me for a day or so."

"Just one moment." Beachey evidently turned from the telephone to consult Constance. "Mrs. Lee will come to Beechlands," he said.

JEFFRIES came back across the lawn to Nannie Wendell.

She was too mercurial in temperament for her spirits to stay submerged long, and she could not restrain a giggle as he sat down again.

"Clay, you stalk and look exactly like an Indian chief about to start on the war-path. All you need is a feather bonnet."

He made no answer, and she became very quiet and demure with the uncomfortable feeling of one who has been frivolous at the wrong moment.

"Mrs. Lee is coming here to see me to-morrow evening," he said presently. "I hope you will stay over." His tone was casual and indifferent; a little too much so, Nannie thought.

She wanted to clap her hands, but again she exercised unwonted self-restraint. What a master stroke on Connie's part! How clever of her! Daring, too, Nannie reflected as she looked at his impervious, granitelike face.

"She will be accompanied by Beachey," Jeffries added. "I shall have to ask you to look after him, while I see her in the library."

Nannie brightened. So he was to see Constance alone? That was good. She disliked Beachey, but under the circumstances she felt that she could make herself agreeable to him for hours if necessary, with the best will in the world.

She scarcely saw Jeffries the next day. He was busy, closeted with men who came and went. And when they met at dinner, he was absorbed and aloof. He did not refer to Constance; and Nannie, respecting his mood, scattered light chitter-chatter like chaff to the wind, and felt as if she were an all-day bicycle rider pedaling to keep up and without relief in sight.

They had scarcely finished their coffee, and moved into the hall, when there was the sound of motor wheels on the gravel drive. A servant threw open the door, and Constance came up the steps, crossed the broad porch, and entered the hall, followed by Beachey.

Nannie found time to admire Clay's perfect manner. He was the courteous, dignified host receiving two strangers who had come upon a matter of business. But she divided this admiration between him and Constance.

"They meet as if for the first time," Nannie, who reveled in unusual and dramatic situations, said to herself. "And Connie has dressed the part faultlessly."

She wore a dark frock, with a small toque covering her bright hair. She was pale and

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The next moment there was the sharp crack of a mountaineer's rifle; and Jeffries staggered and fell.

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there were shadows under her eyes, but there was no diffidence in her quiet manner.

Nannie kissed her impulsively on both cheeks; and Constance in return pressed her friendly hand tightly for a moment, and then let it drop.

"Mr. Beachey, you know Mrs. Wendell, I believe," Jeffries said. "I am sure you and she will find plenty to talk about. Mrs. Lee, will you come into the library with me? Or will you both have some coffee first?"

"Thank you; no," Constance replied. "We must catch the ten o'clock train back; so I think I will go with you into the library at once."

He led the way down the stately, old-fashioned hall, with its portraits of earlier generations of the family and famous racehorses on the dark wainscotted walls, opened the library door, and stood aside for her to enter.

He placed a chair for her, and she sat down, absently drawing off her gloves. She detested gloves, and always felt that it was impossible to talk when she had them on her hands.

Jeffries, also, sat down, and waited. She had sought this interview, and he put the burden of opening it upon her.

She was not anxious to accept it. The silence emphasized by the heavy, regular ticking of a grandfather's clock grew almost oppressive before she spoke.

"JUDGE JEFFRIES," she said slowly, "you are the heaviest sufferer in this disgraceful affair; but I also am in a most unpleasant position. This swindle was carried out in my stable, by the man in charge of it. I learned of it too late to prevent it." There was the least tremble in her voice. She could not yet recall her failure to reach Latonia in time, with any degree of equanimity.

"I have been busy ever since in following the thing up," she went on, "with the aid of Mr. Beachey and John Bell, a detective I have employed." She did not see the fleeting smile on Jeffries's lips at the mention of this combination. "And I thought, if you would let me go over with you the results we have gleaned, we might save time in getting the matter cleared up."

"Thank you very much for the assistance you offer on behalf of yourself, Mr. Beachey and Mr. Bell," Jeffries replied. "But I think the investigation had better be left where it belongs, in the hands of the jockey club."

The rebuff was a distinct one, but Constance refused to show either anger or disappointment.

"Very well," she acquiesced quietly. "If you prefer not to work with us, that is a question for you to decide. I shall, therefore, lay our evidence directly before the jockey club."

A slight flush showed on Jeffries's cheekbones.

"Again I must protest," he said coldly. "This is a very personal matter, as perhaps you and your coadjutors may recognize, and I shall handle it alone."

"You are quixotic, Judge Jeffries." Her voice was stifled.

"Perhaps. It does not seem so to me, however."

"AT LEAST you will not refuse to listen to me, to hear what we have discovered," she said. "I have certain facts in my possession that you could not possibly know, and that might cause you to look at the whole situation from a different viewpoint."

"You are very kind, Mrs. Lee"—inflexibly. "But I have already decided on my own course."

She made a slight gesture of exasperation; but she did not give in.

"I can understand your attitude in a way, Judge Jeffries. Your distrust of me and of Mr. Beachey is to a certain extent merited. But you surely are broad-minded enough to put aside the personal equation at a time like this. All that I am asking is to let me tell you what we know and have discovered. Then, if you wish, we can put it into writing, and you can give it to the jockey club as the sworn deposition of various witnesses."

He inclined his head formally.

"A very fair proposition, but I could not accept it."

"Will you tell me why?"

"I would prefer not. But, since you ask me, I will be frank. I do not care to accept either direct or implied assistance or favors of any kind from either you or Mr. Beachey, or your private detective, Bell."

The thrust was so sharp that, although she had prepared herself for something of the sort, she winced. But when she had decided

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to see him, she had put herself and her own feelings entirely aside, and centered only on her objective. She would not give up now.

"That—that is, as you say, frank. But aren't you rather foolish to let a rigid personal pride stand in the way of bringing two scoundrels like DeVries and Gabriel to their deserts? You may doubt the sincerity of our motives; but you are a lawyer, Judge Jeffries, and you can easily prove the honesty of our intentions by a brief consideration of the evidence we submit."

She could not interpret the odd expression that flitted over his face. He was thinking that Beachey was also a lawyer, and that he did not exactly see himself grasping for Beachey's ingenious presentation as at a last straw, and then finding it worthless and having to discard it. They would be left in a position to say that they had done everything in their power to assist him, and that he had refused to use the evidence they gave him, since it indicated his connivance in the swindle.

He remained silent, and her head lifted haughtily.

"LET me remind you," she said, "that you are not the only one implicated in this. Joybells, the ringer, was my horse. If you are in the mud, I am in the mire. I shall never cease in my efforts until this scandal is probed, and the men who planned and engineered it are punished."

"I hope you will be successful," he returned with formal civility. "Our endeavors seem to be directed toward the same end, but they can hardly move on parallel lines."

There was a sudden flash of fire in her eyes.

"You are going to let two scoundrels get away with a million dollars or more, and enjoy the money they have stolen while they gloat over the way they have used you? For the sake of a false, foolish, insane pride, you are willing to do this?"

"It is not pride, Mrs. Lee."

"Oh, I understand," she cried. "You do not have to explain. You don't trust me—any of us. But we—I, especially—are not asking your confidence. All we request is that you shall give us a hearing. Surely, it would be no derogation of your dignity to do that."

"I am sorry to seem discourteous," he said stiffly. "But I do not care to reopen the subject."

AT LAST she understood that his refusal was final, that he would have no dealings with herself or Beachey. Whichever way she turned, by whatever method she tried to reach him, she was met by a wall of stone.

A profound discouragement came over her, and then a passionate anger.

"I was wrong!" Her voice vibrated tensely. "I should not have come here. To do so, I put everything behind me. My own pride, my self-respect. I made a great sacrifice, and made it gladly. But you have not changed a particle, Judge Jeffries. You are still as hard and inflexible as you were years ago."

He turned quickly.

"What do you know of me years ago? I met you for the first time in February."

"Oh, no; it was not for the first time." At last she could express it, voice the resentment, the sense of injustice that had rankled in her soul for years. A sharp, cruel joy ran through her veins.

She did not raise her voice, but it pulsated through the room.

"When I met you for the first time, you were a judge—a very young, a very hard one. Your father and mine were friends. Oh, yes!"—in answer to a startled movement on his part. "I, too, came from Bainbridge. My father was Thomas Logan. I have heard that he was a fine, dashing fellow in his day, but I remember him as a drink-sodden wreck, married to that low, common woman who was my stepmother, and completely ruled by her. She hated me, and planned to get rid of me, because she couldn't subdue me; she knew instinctively that I wasn't her sort. I was always running away from home. I ran far and fast, too, on any horse that I could manage to pick up—once on your Bonny Bells. But I was always hauled back.

"So they dragged me, the little horse-thief, before you; me a poor, little frightened child, with no more real harm in her than a wild colt, just daring and adventurous. I'll never forget the way you tried to bully and coerce me.

"I can hear your voice yet. 'That little sorrel-top of yours is defiant, Mr. Logan,'

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you said to my father. 'If we can't curb that incorrigible bent of hers, we'll have to see what they can do with her at the reform school.'

"Defiant? Of course I was. As defiant of you then as I am now, and always shall be. I'd have died before I would have let you know how scared and trembling I really was. If I had cried and whined, you would have released me in spite of my stepmother's testimony and that of a lot of other stupid brutes; but, instead, I sauced you. Some one in the back of the courtroom laughed, and I saw your mouth get grim, and the blood come up into your face. It was an affront to your dignity that you couldn't stand, and so you took it out on me."

She stopped, unable for the moment to go on. The silence was heavy and brooding, and yet palpitant with emotion. He was looking at her steadily, with the expression of a man forced to believe the incredible, hearing statements that he could neither refute nor yet quite comprehend. His face had grown gray; the lines on it seemed etched in charcoal.

She was leaning forward, her clasped hands on her knees; forgetful of him and her surroundings, looking on some picture so vivid in her memory that it obscured, obliterated the present.

"I can see that little country courtroom now, with its drab walls and the coco matting on the floor, flies buzzing against the dusty window-panes, and you sitting up above me, enjoying your petty show of power. For fifteen minutes you harangued me, held me there in a pillory, alternately thundering platitudes at me and smearing me with vitriolic sarcasm. I can hear your voice still, rasping and hard and cruel. There wasn't much left of me when you got through; but I still held my head up and sauced you. Then you handed me down the stiffest sentence that you could give me, and sent me away from the sunshine and freedom I loved to that gray hell.

"YOU said you'd break me." Her mouth curled, her voice rang with a mordant exultation. "Did you do it? Three years at a mangle in that sweltering basement couldn't do it. All the restrictions and punishments they could impose on me couldn't. I come of a stock that laughed at Indian tortures. Well, I got out at last, and I struggled above it all—somehow."

Jeffries, who had listened to her, staring at her with fascinated eyes, now sat with bowed head, gazing at the floor. A silence had again fallen between them; how long it lasted, neither of them knew. Then he lifted his head, and brushed back the lock from his brow.

"Your revenge is very complete." His voice was hoarse, he spoke slowly. "For myself, I can make no excuses. I was young, far too young to occupy such a responsible position; and youth is very hard and arrogant, very sure of its judgments. There is no reparation I can make; none. But if it's the least satisfaction for you to know that you have broken me, as I, thank God, did not succeed in breaking you, why, take it, Mrs. Lee, rejoice in it. The more you rejoice, the more I shall feel I am repaying something of my debt to you.

"What you have just told me clears up so many things between us." He spoke meditatively. "Once or twice, I've had a sense of having known you before; but it vanished so quickly that I could never grasp it. And then, even when you were in a gentle mood, I would sometimes catch a look of hatred in your eyes, and you would change to ice. It always puzzled and disquieted me, but the riddle is plain now."

He got up and stood with one hand on the table beside her.

"YOU pay off your scores with interest, don't you? Compound interest, in this case. You've played a wonderful game, Constance; and you've played it to a finish. And yet, for all your fixed purpose, there have been moments when you loved me, loved me almost as well—only, that could never be—as I loved you."

She had drawn back in her chair, her lashes on her cheek, a frozen statue. Looking down at her, he repeated half under his breath:

> "The pride I conquered is now my scathe,
> It conquers me again.
> The old resentment lasts like death
> For you, love; yet you refrain,
> And I break my heart on your hard unfaith,
> And I break my heart in vain.

"Forgive my dropping into verse," he said. "It comes on me like a disease now and then; and the quotation seemed so apt."

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He struck against the table lightly with his hand.

"If you had only told me all this, when we met in Atlantic City, or even later in New York, I would have gone down on my knees to you, and begged you to let me make such poor reparation as I could for the rest of my life. But"—he drew a deep sigh—"you would not have listened to me. This revenge you planned, and carried through, was more to you than love, or content, or any of the things I might rashly have promised.

"Honestly, I can't help but admire you for it. You've made a thorough job of it, and put it across with uncommon cleverness. But, speaking quite abstractly, it isn't worthy of you. Big as it is, you are bigger still. You are a very splendid and wonderful woman, with more courage and spirit than one man in a million; and revenge, even on a grand scale, is a rather scrubby weakness. Great natures such as yours should never yield to it. Such yielding always argues a lack of a true sense of proportion.

"That sounds," he said, "as if I were again smearing you with vitriolic sarcasm, and thundering moral platitudes. Really, I don't mean it so. I should be glad to feel that my downfall had contributed to your happiness. Then it would seem as if I had at least paid something on the old debt."

CONSTANCE started up. Her impulse was to cry out:

"Oh, stop this nonsense, this silly talk about revenge! You've got to listen to me, to let me explain."

And then she saw herself pouring out the whole story, and her courage failed. There was so much in her motives that had been psychological and emotional; they had been so mixed from time to time. She saw herself faltering and floundering over his inevitable questions. She did not realize that his love was great enough to bridge them; she only heard him asking:

"Why are you mixed up with people like Beachey, DeVries and Delia? Why, when you came to Atlantic City and won from me the facts regarding the Coal Corporation, should my arrangements with them have immediately been nullified? Why did you not tell me that you were Caroline Logan? Why should Beachey have used influence and money to weaken me politically? When you made that spectacular trip down the river and were in telephone communication with me, why did you not give me even a hint that the race was fixed? You told me you did not trust Beachey and were afraid of him, and yet he asked this interview and is here with you to-night; why?"

She had an inclination to put her hands over her ears to shut out those unasked, judicial questions. She crushed back her longing to make him believe, in spite of his doubts. As she saw it, the only way she could explain was by action that would convict DeVries and Gabriel, and publicly clear Jeffries. That was the task that lay before her.

"I—I am going," she said uncertainly.

He was moving over to open the door for her, when he stopped abruptly.

"One moment," he said. "I quite forgot. Your check, Mrs. Lee." He took up an envelope from the table, and handed it to her. "I had hoped you would reach the track in time, and I could persuade you not to make the wager. But since you did not come, there was nothing for me to do but follow instructions."

"Of course," she said dully. She thrust the envelope in the bag on her wrist, and walked into the hall.

"Come, Mr. Beachey." She spoke quietly. "Good night, Nannie."

"But I shall see you to-morrow?" Nannie put an arm about her, and they went out to the porch together.

Jeffries and Beachey followed. As Constance started toward the steps, Nannie Wendell said something to Beachey, and he turned to answer her. The night was dark, and Jeffries stepping forward, guided Constance to the waiting car. He held open the door, and she took her seat inside.

The next moment there was the sharp crack of a mountaineer's rifle from one of the dark masses of shrubbery on the lawn; and Jeffries staggered and fell.

The climax to Mrs. Woodrow's stirring novel of the race track will come in the next instalment.
See December EVERYBODY'S—out November 15th.

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Another Craig Kennedy Story

The Radio Wraith

The Scientific Detective Turns the Wonders of Wireless Against One Who Seeks to Use Them to Base Ends

By Arthur B. Reeve

Illustration by Harold Anderson

"SHE'S dead! She's dead!"

The frantic scream of a girl rang out wildly in the darkness of the picture show at the American Roof. It thrilled the theater at one of those psychological moments when the emotions of the audience, intensified by an exciting climax of the new spirit melodrama, "The Wireless Phantom," had reached the thin line that divides pleasurable excitement from hysteria.

There was consternation about us. The pretty little gray-clad usher was intermittently pulling at the shoulder of a beautiful girl, bending over another even more beautiful, and turning to look about helplessly in the darkness. All about people were calling for information, aid. Some few were even heartlessly getting up to leave.

"Come, Walter, those girls need help!"

Kennedy shouldered down the aisle and a moment later was murmuring in the ear of the girl now trying to awake some recognition in the lovely form beside her.

"Let me help you get your friend out of this crowd. Right through that door is the Lounge. . . ."

In the pencil of light of the usher's little electric flash, she raised a pair of gloriously beautiful eyes gratefully to him. But no sound escaped her lips now. Her fright was too intense at the continued silence of her companion.

Craig and I were now carrying the inert girl to the Lounge, past craning necks and curious glances, followed by much advice from those who before had not known what to do. By this time there was panic in the audience, a scramble to get to the aisles. The ushers were utterly unable to keep back the jamming crowd. All over the house came cries, "Lights!" As we entered the door to the Lounge, the picture suddenly stopped and the lights flashed up. In the glow was illumined the pale face of our burden.

The other girl bent forward to get a better look at the limp figure. The pallor, ghastly in its completeness, was too much for her. With a low cry, a slight wavering of her slender body, she sank to the floor in a faint before any one could catch her.

It was at a big afternoon trade showing of an independent picture, "The Wireless Phantom." Several hundred exhibitors, exchange men and their guests, including ourselves, were there. First there had been a luncheon for the stars, the cast, director, producer, and those financially interested. We had not been present at the luncheon, but had dropped into the theater afterward.

Craig motioned me toward a gaily painted wooden settee and we laid the girl on it.

I turned hastily to help an attendant with the girl who had just fainted. We placed her gently on another settee along the other wall. Then, as the ushers seemed to know just how to take care of the one

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who had only fainted, I turned again to Craig. His face was grave. He had just straightened up from listening for the heartbeats, his fingers were still feeling the pulse. Slowly he laid the beautiful little hand down by the side of the girl.

"Will she be all right, soon?"

Chin on his hand, head bent forward thoughtfully, Craig studied that beautiful girl lying so quietly before us.

"She has gone—passed out—and I have an idea that all is not just right!" he whispered to me.

I looked again. It did not seem possible. Except for the pallor, there was no sign of death. Just a bloodless silence and a look on the face of utter weariness. Her golden hair was in ringlets. Lashes, black and long, now swept her cheeks in a delightful curve, augmented by the thin arch of the eyebrows above. It was a perfectly oval face, with delicate, regular features; the body was slender and lithe.

Back of us we could hear the excited audience as ushers vainly strove to keep it quiet. Every time the door opened, the crowd surged toward the entrance.

"Who is she?"

Craig opened her hand-bag. There were no visiting cards, just a few trinkets and feminine things, a little money—and a bottle of bichloride tablets—half empty!

"My God, Craig, she's done it herself!" I gasped. "Why?"

Kennedy merely shrugged.

"Who is she?" came the question again.

"Nothing about her to show," replied Craig. "Not a clue in the bag, even to her name, so far as I can see."

For some reason, now, her face seemed familiar to me. I couldn't understand it. I had never met her in any of my newspaper work, I felt sure. I felt a nudge at my elbow, I turned and there, awe in every feature, was the little usher, whispering, "I know."

"Who?"

"Don't you see? She's in the picture! That other girl"—jerking her head toward the second—"was in it, too. This is Maude Murray. The one who screamed and fainted is Evelyn Murray, her sister."

Now I realized why she had seemed so familiar. I had been watching her with interest for almost three reels, in make-up. Evelyn Murray was the dashing, brilliant beauty of the two, a distinctive type, with curly, henna hair, snapping blue eyes, a fair skin with vivid coloring and rosy lips.

AS WE watched the nervous twitchings that indicated her coming return to consciousness, she seemed to be mumbling as if she were asleep. Craig moistened her lips and she tried to speak.

"Let me up! Please don't hold me!" she gasped.

Craig laid a restraining hand on the girl's arm. "Just a moment, Miss Murray. Rest a little longer."

"But—Maude—how is she?"

"Tell me. When was your sister taken ill?" equivocated Craig.

Weakly Evelyn replied. "I noticed it first about the second reel. . . . She turned to me. 'Evelyn,' she said, 'I wish we were home! I feel so tired—so exhausted!' Then I saw her gasp. She seemed to choke. Her hand reached for mine. Her other hand was on her heart. . . . Suddenly she collapsed . . . on me. I touched her gently . . . whispered to her. . . . But she didn't answer me. I was terrified. . . . I screamed!"

By this time the name of Maude Murray had been whispered around everywhere in the audience. The people were stunned. It was so impossible that she should be dead.

"Have you friends here?" Craig asked Evelyn.

"Please find Mr. Creedon. . . . Mr. Wiley ought to know. . . . Have you seen Mr. Winslow?"

I raised my eyebrows at the name of Creedon. Old Enoch Creedon was the millionaire owner of the Creedon Manufacturing Company. Wiley's name was not so reassuring. Nor was Winslow's. The *Star* had been running an exposure of some of the bucket-shop practises of Wiley, Winslow & Co.

A rather dapper elderly man and a ponderous young one were pushing their way past the man at the door.

"Evelyn! . . . I'm sorry. I came just as soon as I heard. I'll help you make the arrangements. . . . Whatever possessed you girls to sit out alone among strangers instead of with the rest of us?"

It was the elderly man. The younger had made his way quietly to the group

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about the settee where Maude was lying. He did not try to hide how greatly he was shocked.

Evelyn tried to smile. "Mr. Creedon, Maude and I thought if we sat out in the audience we might get the real verdict on the picture. That was all. . . . But . . . what arrangements do you have to make?"

The girl hesitated. Creedon looked at Kennedy in a blundering, confused way. Before any one could answer, Evelyn's active mind had seized upon the truth. Before Craig could stop her she was at Maude's side. One glance was enough. Clasping Wiley's arm, she broke into violent sobbing. She seemed to stumble blindly toward Craig. "Mr.—Mr.——"

"Mr. Kennedy," he soothed.

"Did she die—while I was ill?"

"No," he answered gently. "She died on your arm, before we came to you." He put his own arm out to support her, then turned to the others. "We must get her away—home. Where are her father and mother?"

Creedon was nearest. "Her mother is dead. And her father—is away."

"Can you get news to him immediately?"

"No one knows where he is." This was from Wiley, under his hand, drawing Craig aside. "Her father is James Murray—former treasurer of the Creedon Company. . . . Some trouble. . . . He disappeared."

CRAIG was about to ask another question when a regally handsome woman came pushing forward. The crowd parted, almost automatically, to let her through. They were afraid of Madame Alpha, the medium. For every one recognized Madame Alpha from the picture. "The Wireless Phantom" had been financed by old Enoch Creedon to exploit spiritism and to please Madame Alpha, who appeared in it with the Murray sisters.

"Where are those two blessed girls? Evelyn, you poor child, I am so sorry!" She turned to Craig. "I am Madame Alpha. I have worked with these poor girls for weeks at the studio. Now I must help them. Let me go home with Evelyn. She needs a woman at this time. I knew their father, too. They had all been to séances at my place, often, to communicate with the lost mother. . . ."

"Sure, come on, Mark. . . . The dear girl will want you, most of all. Evelyn, dear, we have come to you. Mark and I will take you to my home." A voice radiant with youth, Irish enthusiasm and good nature, had interrupted, as the woman squeezed through the crowd. "You poor kid! I could carry you all the way!"

The greeting of eyes between the young man, Mark, and Evelyn left no doubt of their close understanding.

"And who are you?" asked Craig.

A little laugh and the woman tossed her black bobbed head. "It's easy to see you don't get to see much big-time vaudeville! I'm Kate Heffron. Everybody knows Kate! That's my line."

Kennedy liked her face, her big-hearted manner. "And the gentleman, Mark?" he asked.

Kate nodded toward Wiley. "Mark Winslow. They had a team once. But they got divorced." I recalled a statement to the financial editor from Winslow, now, that he had severed his connection with the firm shortly after it started in business.

Madame Alpha accepted the situation with a philosophical smile and I lost her in the milling crowd. I came upon Craig questioning Evelyn, apart, as Kate and Winslow were making arrangements to take her away.

Craig had been quietly asking her about her missing father and Evelyn was telling what she knew. I fancied there was a certain fear, a dread in her voice, however, as she spoke of the tragedy in the lives of her sister and herself.

It seemed that James Murray had speculated with funds of the Creedon Company in an oil development that had been recommended by Wiley, Winslow & Co. They had withdrawn their endorsement of the oil promotion just before it collapsed. But Murray had not been able to get out in time. It had crashed and he had fled. After that, the shortage was discovered.

Finally under Kennedy's questions, Evelyn whispered something of a mysterious, sinister message that had come to Maude that morning; finally repeated it:

Maude Murray
654 W. 48th Street.

I warn you to stop looking for me before it is too late. Nothing but evil can come to you if you keep up the search. No one will find me in this world.

JAMES MURRAY.

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Kennedy learned that the girls had been seeking to clear their father of the charge made against him after his disappearance. Then this sinister message had been picked up by an amateur radio enthusiast.

Craig was all sympathy and encouragement as Kate Heffron put her arm about Evelyn and with Mark Winslow managed to induce her to leave things to Craig and Creedon.

IT WAS such a situation as enabled Craig to use his influence. The dead girl, of course, could not be moved without the permission of the authorities. Kennedy called our friend, Dr. Leslie, the medical examiner, to hasten these formalities and also to help in clearing up the mysterious death. I was, of course, eager to take up the case for the *Star*. Therefore I accompanied them down to Leslie's autopsy room at the Morgue.

Kennedy and Leslie were busy there a long time. At the theater I had picked up the girl's coat, left in the seat she had occupied. Now, as I examined it, I found some strands of henna hair caught on a button. Craig nodded as I told him. But he was interested in something else.

"That girl was not killed by bichloride," exclaimed the doctor, abruptly.

"I suspected that at once," returned Craig quietly.

"Not a suicide?" I said. "Then what did kill her?"

Leslie shook his head. "Not a mark on the body. . . . Not a trace of poison in her stomach."

"How, then?"

"It's very mysterious," remarked Kennedy, now taking and folding up carefully in a sheet of white paper the two or three hairs I had discovered. He glanced at his watch and found it far past the dinner hour. "You will send that other stuff up to my laboratory, Leslie? I want to see Evelyn Murray again."

At Kate Heffron's apartment we found no one. Kate had gone to her evening performance. Evelyn had left a note telling Kate that she couldn't stand it any longer, that she had gone to see a friend of hers who worked in a broadcasting studio.

It made me think of the wireless message. At once we began a search of the various stations for her. Just before eight o'clock when its program opened, we found Evelyn at WBS.

"Mr. Kennedy, I am trying to get Dad," she explained. "It may be useless, but I am hoping for some answer. That note to Maude was a wireless message. Dad might be afraid to go out very much. It may be that he passes his time somewhere listening in."

Craig nodded as Evelyn told of broadcasting the appeal to her father, a sort of "spirit message," to locate him wherever he might be. "When did you see him last?"

"About two weeks ago. He excused himself after dinner, said he would be right back. Neither Maude nor I have seen him since then."

"What did you think of that?"

"Not so much, at first. Ever since mother died, Dad has been queer, restless, excitable. Nothing held his attention long at a time. Mother and Dad were such pals." With a far-away look she added: "I'm alone. . . . If Dad would only come to me!"

"What happened at Madame Alpha's when your father was with you last?" asked Craig.

"Nothing to make Dad go away. Mr. Wiley called Maude up late that night, told her about the shortage in father's books. Maybe he was trying to square himself. He thought a great deal of Maude—at least as much as that type of man can think of a woman. I remember I heard Maude cry sharply to him, 'But you told him to buy that!' She was very angry, hung up, then said to me: 'Evelyn, Dad has gone away. There's some trouble with his accounts at Creedon's.' That was all she said. But there's been a good deal of rivalry between Mr. Creedon and Hamilton Wiley since then. I think Maude was trying to get information from both. We had determined to clear Dad, in some way." She was feverishly excited.

"Tell me. Was your father satisfied at the séances?"

"Very much at the last one. Madame Alpha's guide was strong that day and mother's message seemed to comfort him. 'Don't worry, Jim. Stick to the girls. They need you. But above all, keep well. Take a trip if you feel you need it, dear boy . . . dear boy.' The repetition was fainter and Madame Alpha stopped and

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looked at us. Those words brought my mother to me forcibly. How often I have seen her leaning over Dad's shoulder when he was discouraged, trying to comfort him, inspire him! Many times it was only 'Dear boy!' she said, but it was enough for Dad. It always made him want to go on. That day was the first time the medium used those words and Dad was happier then than he had been for a long time."

"HOW did you happen to get in that picture?" I asked.

"Mr. Creedon insisted. He fell in love with Maude's face the first time he saw her with Dad. You know, Mr. Creedon advised Dad to visit Alpha. That is how Maude and I met Mr. Creedon. He liked her ways from the first. After that they were together often."

"Were they engaged?"

"I think so. But she didn't tell me."

"Did you meet any one else at these séances?"

"Oh, many prominent people. I really couldn't tell you all of them."

"Did you meet Mr. Winslow there?"

She colored a bit. "Mercy, no! He hates all that scatterbrain claptrap, as he calls it. I met him through Mr. Wiley, after Mr. Creedon introduced Dad to Ham Wiley. I used to feel that he was sorry for it for Ham Wiley fell in love with Maude, too. It made Mr. Creedon furious to have a rival. He gave no quarter in business and I think he thought love was the same kind of game."

"What did your father think of you girls and——"

"Oh, he used to laugh at the way Ham Wiley and Mr. Creedon behaved about Maude. But he didn't like Mark Winslow. I think Mr. Wiley said something that caused that." The recollections were getting too much for her. "I think Maude must have found out something and was going to tell Mr. Creedon, something about Wiley, Winslow & Co."

"You'll go back now to Kate Heffron?" urged Kennedy.

"Y-yes. The program's started. I guess there won't be any word from him—tonight."

Up at the laboratory where Kennedy was at work over some flasks that Dr. Leslie had sent up, I thought a good deal about Evelyn's pathetic story of going to the medium, of James Murray at Madame Alpha's, of the girls and the messages from their dead mother. Evelyn had told us a good deal between the lines about Maude and the medium, about Maude and old Creedon. I pondered on Wiley, the bucket-shop operator of Wiley, Winslow & Co.; on Wiley as Maude's suitor, and the rivalry between Creedon and Wiley that she had inspired. It was complicated by Mark Winslow, the silent partner, and the romance of Evelyn and Mark.

It was verging on midnight when Kennedy neared the end of his research.

"Maude Murray's blood was full of kenatoxin, the toxin of fatigue," he remarked, "so full of it that it overwhelmed her, killed her."

"But I thought there was no mark on her and no poison in the stomach?"

"Ah!" he smiled. "But the contents of the intestines showed poison. One would not ordinarily look there. I find minute intestinal capsules, as it were, capsules not digested by the stomach juices. You know they make casings which only the intestinal fluids dissolve. Here there are orange seeds, little orange pips that she must have swallowed, coated with the material of intestinal capsules—filled with this deadly toxin of fatigue."

The telephone rang and I answered it. "There's no one on it, Craig," I said. "Yet we're connected with some one!"

He took the instrument, jiggled at the hook, finally got central, who said, "They don't answer!"

"But who are they? What number?"

"It's 4321 Main."

"What address?"

"I'll look it up. . . 654 West 48th."

It was the address of Evelyn Murray calling. And no answer now.

AS WE came to the door of the little one-room apartment, Craig paused. He could turn the knob and it was unlocked. Yet the door did not budge. He saw that the door opened outward and leaned down to examine it. Under it had been placed a thin little wedge. The more pressure, the tighter it jammed.

He kicked out the wedge and the door flung open. A stifling, overpowering blast of air came, dead air.

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The electric light was on, revealing Evelyn, on the floor, near the telephone, unconscious, almost dead. Craig lifted her to the bed.

I was gasping. What was the matter with the air? Craig strode to the window. It was stuffed with something, closed, locked. The other window was the same. He tugged at them until he had them open. "This was a hermetically sealed room!" he panted.

"Why didn't she open the window, though?"

Craig was working over the girl. He did not answer. My eye caught a book open on the table under the light. Near it was the manila paper wrapping in which it had come. I looked. "Dracula"!

All the passages about the Vampire, down in that weird Balkan castle, were marked. Evelyn had evidently been reading them, as had been intended. The book was now open at that part where the Vampire had appeared, sucking the life blood, night by night, as it flew in at the window of the young wife in London.

"No wonder she left the windows alone!" I exclaimed.

By that time Craig had got a hospital, called an ambulance, explained what was needed. Soon the ambulance surgeon and another man appeared, with a bolt-studded, long, cylindrical tank of oxygen. It was the better part of half an hour before Evelyn was revived.

"No, I didn't go back to Kate," she faltered in reply to Kennedy. "I wanted to come here. That book—I don't know who left it. It was here on my table when I came in. I read it—it frightened me. I had to read those marked parts—I had to—I couldn't stop! Then I felt overcome. I don't know—I thought I heard a noise at the door—the bat! I had just enough strength to get to the telephone—then all went black."

She was feeling her throat and neck as she talked. Evidently the terror of "Dracula" was very vivid in her mind.

Kennedy now insisted on accompanying Evelyn back to Kate Heffron's apartment. It was nearly two in the morning when we reached it but we found Kate awake.

"Sure, the sight of you is good to me! I was afraid something had happened to you." Kate put her arms about Evelyn and kissed her warmly and sincerely, as she got disjointed bits of the story. "I'm going to get you right to bed, honey. Sleep will help. We two-a-day people know that." She nodded good-naturedly as she led Evelyn to a dainty bedroom.

When she reentered the room her face was grave. "Do you know who Maude Murray was with, just before she died—alone, too?"

Kennedy shook his head.

"You know they can't serve cocktails in the public dining-room at that hotel. So they had a private dining-room for the party. It had a little coat room. That's where you keep the stuff. You have to bring it yourself. Well, I saw old Creedon in there, alone, with Maude, and I'm thinking it was the cocktails!"

"Did she have one?"

"Yes. I saw it."

"What about the table? It was a private dining-room."

"There was one at each place. Of course."

NEXT morning Craig wanted to see Creedon. We found him at the Works, where he seldom went, now. He seemed overwhelmed by the death of Maude, trying to get his mind off it.

"Sometimes, gentlemen," he said, "I think I have more sympathy for Murray than for others in this case. If Wiley, Winslow & Co., succeeded in putting anything over on an old hand like me, Murray must have been easy picking in the frame of mind he was in. I told Maude that many times. She had no confidence in any of them, even though Wiley called to see her often enough. She merely tolerated him for the sake of her father."

Creedon hastened to say that he had been roped in and trimmed by the bucket-shop gang of Wiley, Winslow & Co. He launched into a denunciation of Wall Street sharks interspersed with a tirade against spiritualists. He wound up by being vengeful and bitter now even toward the medium and the rest of the circle. As we left I wondered whether it was a pose.

At Kate Heffron's Craig was pleased to find Mark Winslow. Evelyn was greatly excited. She had had a message, apparently from her father, picked up by her friend at WBS. Craig read it carefully.

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It closed with these cryptic sentences: "You see, I warned poor Maude. Please stop all efforts to find me before it is too late."

Kate seemed bursting to tell something.

"You know, Mr. Kennedy, what I told you when you brought Evelyn here this morning? Well, Mark has something to say, haven't you, Mark?"

I could not make out whether Winslow told it with alacrity or not. "Why," he said, with at least a show of frankness, "when Kate was talking this morning, I happened to mention that I once heard Creedon say, 'Well, Wiley, if I can't have her—you shan't!' I don't know what he meant, of course, but whatever it was his manner showed that he felt it."

"Did you resign before or after Murray made these unfortunate investments?" asked Craig.

"I resigned at the time. It was one of the things I would not stand for."

Mark Winslow grew vehement as he asserted that he had been inveigled into partnership in Wiley, Winslow & Co., that he had resigned, but that he had found he could not immediately prevent the use of the name Winslow by the corporation.

As we went, Craig outlined a long day's work for himself. For one thing he was determined to hold a séance with the circle at Madame Alpha's, with trumpet, cabinet and everything. Also during the morning he wanted to use a new wireless direction finder he had invented.

Kennedy had laid out enough to keep him busy for some hours alone and I decided to drop in at the *Star* office. I had been wondering if Madame Alpha was a tool of Wiley, also. I had read of such cases. Accordingly I spent the morning learning the gossip of Wall Street about financiers and stock gamblers who used mediums. At least it would make a good Sunday story.

I found a lot of cases, but nothing much about this one that was new. When I saw Craig again late in the afternoon, I suggested a visit to Wiley's office. To our surprise we found Winslow in the office. He wore his hat, it was true. But it aroused my suspicion. Had he always been a silent partner after banking hours?

We must have shown our surprise. Winslow had the grace to flush. But Wiley was arrogant and inclined to be critical. He resented our visit and plainly showed it. As Craig put his questions, his answers were brief and sarcastic.

NOR did Winslow's explanation allay my suspicion. He said that he had a scheme to persuade Wiley to secure the reorganization of the oil company so that he himself could arrange the discount of notes of Murray's, endorsed by Winslow himself and secured by the new stock issued. Thus Murray might make restitution to Creedon. It would relieve Evelyn. Then by the sale of the stock, Murray might rehabilitate himself. That sounded well. Almost too well.

Kennedy had been considering the scheme. "Sort of having Murray lift himself by Winslow's boot-straps," he commented.

Wiley was sour, threatening. "Say, Kennedy," he drawled, "you mind your business, and I'll mind mine!"

Craig kept his temper. But I felt we were getting nowhere. Winslow scowled but said nothing to Wiley. I felt it looked rather dark for Winslow, there with Wiley.

In the laboratory early that evening, Kennedy was treating and washing the hairs I had found on Maude's coat, examining them under the lens. The telephone rang. It was Evelyn Murray.

"Then you are not up in Connecticut?" she asked, greatly surprised, it seemed.

"No. Why?" answered Craig.

"Oh, I just had a message from a radio fan in Stamford. He said you were at his amateur station, that it was the station used by my father, that you wanted me to go up there and were waiting for me!"

"On the contrary—I am here at the laboratory. I want you to be available this evening, too. Besides, I think I have located the station your father used. It is somewhere in New Jersey."

"Oh, I'm so glad I called up, first! Then this was some new danger for me! Oh, Mr. Kennedy, can't you *do* something?"

He thought a moment. The peril to Evelyn was evidently growing more acute. He decided on action. "Yes," he called back. "Be ready to go with Mark Winslow when he calls for you!"

Over his laboratory wireless Kennedy

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"Mr. Kennedy, I am trying to get Dad," she explained. "That note to Maude was a wireless message."

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sent a message in dots and dashes which I did not understand. He got an answer. From that moment he was all action, as he arranged for the assembling after dinner of the little circle at Madame Alpha's.

When I entered the room at Madame Alpha's, I felt almost like a boy playing truant to go to the circus. My eyes were popping. I saw Craig smile at my excited enthusiasm. On one side of the room were two pillars standing several feet out from the wall. The curtains were so arranged that the space between them and the wall might be shut off for use as a cabinet.

Getting down on my knees I felt about the floor within the enclosure.

"You should have asked Houdini and the magicians and scientists," said Craig.

"Never mind. I'm looking for buttons and wires."

"You won't find any."

"I'd like to believe that," I nodded.

My curiosity was insatiable. All about me I continued to look. If there was to be trickery here in a few minutes, the necessary paraphernalia would have to be installed quickly and under my eyes. I wanted to be sure. Already some members of the circle were beginning to arrive.

Evelyn betrayed nervousness as she and Winslow entered and bowed to us. Her thoughts were probably on that last meeting when Maude had been with her. She sat down quietly and was very still. Winslow was ill at ease. Never had I seen a man whose hands bothered him so much. He was uncomfortable. He didn't like it and his usual easy manner had forsaken him.

Old Creedon came in by himself. He had had enough of these things. He was through. Compulsory attendance, as, in a way, this was, made him irritable, belligerent. He scarcely noticed Craig or me. For Evelyn there was a genuine gleam of sympathy.

I gasped when Madame Alpha entered the room. Of heroic build, her dignity and calmness seemed as if they must soar into the ether itself to impress those struggling to commune with loved ones here. Her robes of white enhanced the pallor of her skin and the sheen of her hair. She acknowledged our greetings graciously.

Wiley came in, ponderously affable. "Good evening!" With a sweeping bow that included everybody, he stood.

THERE was a hush. "Friends," said Madame Alpha, "you will observe the chairs in the circle. Each has a name on it. I have been asked to seat you in that order."

The sitters included Madame Alpha, as Number One, at the head of the circle. Next was myself, with Evelyn, Winslow, Creedon, Wiley, and Kennedy, the seventh, on the other side of Madame Alpha.

The séance began. Alpha was now in the middle of the room, out of reach of the curtains. The visible properties were solely a table and a long tin horn. There was a central chandelier with a cluster of four white electric-light bulbs surrounding one covered with red cheesecloth, on another circuit. These lamps were controlled from a switch in the corner by the door. Opposite the cabinet was a fireplace with a low fire. Against one wall was a small organ. Opposite that were two windows with heavy dark shades and black curtains. It was on the second floor of an old house that had been changed into apartments.

All of us took our assigned seats in the circle. Alpha then went to the organ. She asked for suggestions regarding hymns. "Lead, Kindly Light" was chosen. It was not an emotional rendering; in fact, I thought the singing rather perfunctory. It seemed more for the medium than for us. So far there had been no emotion, no mystery, no hocus-pocus.

I looked about as the white lights were switched off and only the single light, shaded dull red, remained. I have become accustomed to meeting some regular fellows among the men at séances. But I fight shy of the vast majority of the women. They are too often mere dabblers around the fringe of intellectual pursuits, carrying the burden of the cultural development of the world on their shoulders. Or they are old ladies of the emotional sort. There are some neurotics, both men and women.

After the third hymn Madame Alpha became restless. Beads of perspiration stood on her forehead. She rose again and again, only to resume her seat at the organ immediately. She passed her hand over her forehead, rubbed her hands, then passed one over her forehead again. Her breathing seemed to be difficult, short and noisy. She emitted a series of weird sounds, as if she were in pain.

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The organ sounded, but tunelessly. She began circulating about the room, eyes apparently unseeing, in the darkness of the covered light. Finally she returned to her seat in the circle.

Her control had taken possession: "Two-Ax," former chief of the Crow tribe.

Two-Ax complained that his medium was not working well to-night. He ordered the red light out. Then the fireplace had to be screened. It was done in a shrill, whining voice, quite frankly from the medium who now reclined in the chair, arms tense, eyes closed.

"I want to tell a young lady, one who comes often with her father, that some one from the other world is here—some one who is happy—a recent arrival!"

POOR Evelyn was startled. She seized Winslow's arm, as he sat on the other side of her. I could imagine the tears that must be creeping down her face. Maude's death had been too recent for even Madame Alpha to discuss it without a sad effect on Evelyn.

Now other would-be speakers from beyond seemed to be crowding him and Two-Ax spoke sharply to them about it. In effect, the séance was developing into simply an informal gathering of a number of people, some of whom happened to be dead. I had been accustomed to think of a séance as an event where people sat waiting in the dark with bated breath. Here we chatted, not exactly gaily, but cheerfully enough.

The only thing that could have induced levity as far as I could see was the mothering tone of Alpha to the communicating spirits. It was she who seemed to possess the spirit of admonition. I had heard of "guiding controls." With a voice soft, low, persuasive, much as you would use with turbulent-minded children, Alpha communed with these earth-hungry souls. To me it seemed almost inconsistent. To these mature souls, with the wisdom of two worlds and the encompassing knowledge of all things to be, she spoke as to children, to be chided for pushing and shoving.

While Alpha was moving about, inside the circle, I got my first impression of lights. Phosphorescent lights seemed to appear here, there—all over the room. The light appeared in the immediate vicinity of the person to whom the message was addressed, but not always near the medium. It had no illuminating power; I just saw soft floating splashes of phosphorescence in the darkness.

I made out that Craig had taken occasion to move the trumpet on the floor to the exact center of the room.

Alpha was striving with a message that was not clear.

Suddenly another voice, this time from the trumpet, heavier, more metallic, muffled, drowned out the complaining Chief Two-Ax. Madame Alpha herself was startled. She moved restlessly in her seemingly unnatural sleep.

I bent forward. The voice certainly came from the horn. Both of Alpha's hands were held now, one by Kennedy, the other by myself.

There came a complete sentence at last—a message to Creedon. Alpha was trembling now in her trance-like state.

"Maude sends her love and asks you not to be unhappy. Don't grieve for her!"

Creedon did not know precisely how to take it. It shook his new scepticism to its shallow foundation. As for me, I wondered. It was not ventriloquism. The ventriloquist is not so successful in the dark. It is not the ear he deceives. It is the eye. He directs your attention to a place from which he wants you to think the voice comes. With no light, the eye can not fool you.

Alpha stiffened. "There are malicious spirits—as well as good, beneficent spirits!" she muttered.

Nevertheless the new voice rang out just as clearly, though rather muffled. "I have a message from the mother of the Murray girls!

"I know where your father is. I have found him. He is ready to make restitution for his fault, if he is taken back, free of punishment. He is ready to tell the story of the fraud on old Mr. Creedon. He fell into it and lost, too. That was what Maude had to tell Enoch Creedon!"

Creedon's emotions had got the better of him. "For her sake," he cried, "I agree! I wish she could have the joy of seeing it!"

The voice went on. It told in sharp accents how the message from Murray to his daughters had not been meant as a threat. It was really a warning.

"He knew the desperate nature of some one in the circle. He feared that there

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would be danger to his girls if it became known that they were trying to bring him back. For he has enough knowledge now to convict somebody!"

The voice paused. "Evelyn!" There was a startled cry. "Mark Winslow has told the truth. Trust him!"

I thought she had fainted. But she had merely flung herself into Mark's arms, sobbing. It was probably the first time Mark had ever had any use for a séance.

"WILEY—is a crook—but not a murderer!" The voice paused. "No—the wiser they are—the harder they fall. The sucker in this game—was Wiley! He may have been one end of the pipe line of fool oil money—from this room to the bucket shop—but this woman was the Alpha. Alpha to Omega!"

The circle was more tense now than at any communication from Two-Ax. One could hear the breathing; it was so quiet.

"At the luncheon yesterday," went on the voice in measured, deliberate accents, "some one was near Maude's coat and put a half-filled bottle of bichloride tablets in her hand-bag. But the real murder was not done then nor in that way. It was done by slyly dropping into her cocktail some minute, almost microscopic, faked orange pips—orange pips that contained a deadly poison, kenatoxin, coated with a substance that the stomach could not digest but which would be digested in the intestines—where few autopsies would ever have been likely to show the poison!"

Kennedy had noiselessly switched on the dim red light. I could see that Madame Alpha's face was terror-stricken.

Evelyn was on her feet quickly. "You dreadful woman! Did you kill my sister?"

Alpha had slumped forward, her face covered.

"Did you do it?" Evelyn insisted.

"Sh!"

It was the voice again. "It was the one who dyed with henna some strands of hair to throw off suspicion!"

"Did you?" reiterated Evelyn. "Why?"

The voice went on relentlessly. "She did it! She wanted the old man with the fortune for herself. Maude stood in the way. There was only one thing to do—get rid of Maude. Maude had found out something she intended to tell Enoch Creedon. It was Madame Alpha's part in the fraud on him—on my husband, James Murray!"

Madame Alpha had collapsed. Kennedy fumbled with the switches until he found the one that flooded the room with what seemed a blinding white light. Alpha's hand, which had sought to cover her eyes, now was busy in the folds of her gown.

"Hold that other tight, Walter!" exclaimed Kennedy as he sprang back, seized the fumbling hand and twisted it until the clenched fingers slowly opened, scattering a half dozen peculiar-shaped tablets of bichloride on the floor.

"The strands of henna hair were not Evelyn's, but Alpha's," he exclaimed. "They had been dyed. But underneath they were silvery. They gave me my first clue. They were not enough to convict, but enough to go ahead so that the real criminal might convict herself!"

Kennedy paused. "Creedon, lift back this rug, half across the floor."

There, exposed in a little hole through the ceiling below, was Kennedy's scientifically manufactured séance—the little round diaphragm of a wireless loud speaker, placed in the room just underneath, with the mouthpiece of a loud speaking-horn turned upward toward the little aperture just under the spot where the séance trumpet lay on the floor in the middle of the circle.

"I found Murray," Kennedy went on. "He agreed to tell his story over the wireless. But not otherwise. He feared to make a public appearance unless he received a promise of immunity for restitution. The radio solved the manner of his appearing without putting himself in danger. In return for immunity, he promised to play 'ghost.' If it had not succeeded, he would still not have been in jeopardy!"

Creedon looked from the little hole in the floor to the wretched woman slumped in the chair where Craig and I held her wrists.

"Spirits?" was the one word he uttered.

Kennedy nodded a reply. "A wave of superstition is sweeping over the world today. To her, conscience has meted out punishment—to confess. It is as one who slays the conscience-stricken with a child's toy rubber dagger!"

You'll have another chance to sharpen your wits in "The Hawk"—the next adventure of Craig Kennedy, scientific detective. Look for it in December EVERYBODY'S, out November 15th.

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Fairways and Foul

To Ask Old Race-Track Men to Be Tolerant of Golf—to Lure Them into Betting on a Match—Here Is the Stuff of Tragedy

By Jonathan Brooks

IF JOHN MACK hadn't been as Scotch as Jimmy Burns was Irish, we never would have got into this thing. Jimmy Burns, banker as well as Irish, started it. But John Mack, horseman and ex-golfer, finished it. Down-town, they give Burns credit. Out here at the Fair Grounds, they blame John Mack. After seeing what happened, you may retire and bring in your verdict.

Jim Winkler, Brown Simms, Will Sourwine and Old Man Thomas met in the big double stall Jim Winkler slept in and used for an office and harness room at Pimlico, in the fall. They must have been cussing and swearing for half an hour before Brown Simms realized they weren't getting anywhere.

"Anybody seen John Mack?" he asked.

"Here he is," John said himself, showing up at the door just then. "What is this, a Democratic National Convention or the Merkel Horsethief Detectives Association?" He was a big, raw-boned, red-headed, sandy-complected man, generally very solemn.

"Well, they ain't been any horsethieves in here, up to now," Jim Winkler said.

"All right, move over and let one sit down," said John Mack, grinning. "What's all the excitement?"

"Hell, ain't you heard?" demanded Old Man Thomas. And then they all broke loose trying to tell him, at the same time. And all of them sore as goats.

"Wait a minute, wait a minute," Brown Simms had to yell to make himself heard. "Wait!"

Then Brown fished out a dirty little old clipping from the *Enquirer* he'd been carrying for weeks, and held it out for John Mack to read. They all sat around with their mouths open, except Old Man Thomas, who had a big chew, waiting for John Mack to explode. He read it clear through without saying a word. Here is what it said:

> The conversion of the Fair Grounds center-field into a modern nine-hole golf course is occupying the attention of the management. It is aimed to make the golf links public and charge a nominal sum for its use. The golf links and the club house attachment will be open each year until December first.

They hunched over, their eyes popping out, while John Mack reread the item, by the light of a lantern nailed on the wall. But the suspense was too great, and lasted too long. They couldn't stand it.

"Well, whatcha gotta say?" demanded Jim Winkler.

"Are yuh gona stand for that kind of thing?" asked Will Sourwine.

"Right out there where us hossmen have wintered and readied our hosses for twenty year?" added Old Man Thomas.

"It does look like it's too bad," said John Mack finally in his mild, quiet way.

"Is that all!" Jim Winkler began.

"And we ought to stop it if we can," John Mack went on.

"If we can," exclaimed Old Man Thomas, in derision. "If we can! Why, after all we've done there, all the money we've tooken into that little town, all——"

"Why, Mr. Thomas, I wouldn't say much about that, if I were you," John Mack said, grinning. "Some of us haven't taken much money into the town."

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"And all the stuff we've boughten there," Old Man Thomas continued.

"You old tramp!" John Mack burst out, laughing. "You never buy anything there but plug tobacco and your hay and grain."

And the rest of them laughed with John Mack, because Old Man Thomas never has more than two or three horses, and they're never any good. He had to join the laugh himself.

"What I wanta know is," spoke up Jim Winkler, still sore, "what are we gona do? I move we go on strike. I move we telegraph 'em that they can cut out their damn' gawlf course, or we'll none of us ship back there for the winter."

His idea was a hit with Will Sourwine and Old Man Thomas, but Brown Simms and John Mack renigged.

"We are not in position to threaten them," John Mack said. "Do you suppose they would care very much if we did not train there?"

"Nothin' else *in* the cussed place but the court house, a canning factory and the sawmills," said Jim Winkler. "I'd like to know why they wouldn't want us back."

"There only a few weeks out of each year," said John Mack.

"Well, s'pose you say sumpin'," growled Jim Winkler.

"I'd say this. Let's write a letter to the mayor," John Mack said, calmly. "Let's tell him we do not like the idea of a golf course in the race-track grounds. We can say that the people playing golf there would disturb the horses, and maybe injure some of them. Besides, the grounds are crowded and we think golf and horse-racing do not mix. We can tell them that for twenty years we've made Merkel the horse center of three states. The town has had a lot of free advertising all over the country. Therefore it seems to us that we are entitled to some consideration. How does that sound?"

"Like an old lady's society note," Jim Winkler growled.

"Make it hotter'n that," demanded Old Man Thomas.

"IF THAT'S all we're gona do, just count me out," said Will Sourwine. "I'm not gona ship back there to any goshdarned gawlf linxes, see? If I have to park my ponies in a gawlf course, I don't have to go all the way to Merkel to do it. I'll just stake 'em out over here at Washington so's they'll have some grass. And mebbe charge the District of Columbia for keepin' their grass ate short."

"We're entitled to be let alone by these crippled-up old men who wanta get out and roll a little ball around with sticks," said Jim Winkler.

"We're also entitled to go somewhere else to winter and train," John Mack said.

"By gosh, that's just what we'll do!" Jim Winkler growled.

"This meeting here at Pimlico will be over before long," John Mack argued, conclusively, "and we'll all have to do something. It is late to be looking around for winter quarters now. If we can't stop it by correspondence, we'll all be down there at Merkel in a few weeks, and we'll see what we can do on the ground."

Jim Winkler said the whole crowd had about as much nerve as a fat pug dog, and for his part, he wouldn't have anything to do with such weak-kneed stuff. When he got to Merkel, he said, he'd certainly tell a bunch of them dudes where to head in at. But Jim was elbowed aside, and John Mack was authorized to write a letter to the Hon. T. Donovan Parker, Mayor of Merkel.

The Hon. T. Donovan Parker ignored John Mack's letter. He did not so much as acknowledge its receipt. John Mack admitted as much when taxed on the subject by the doughty Old Man Thomas. There was another round-up, instigated by Old Man Thomas, with Jim Winkler and Will Sourwine right at his hip.

"They don't give a good gosh damn whether we come back or not," swore Old Man Thomas.

"Yeah, and here's one guy 'at don't care more'n 'at whether he goes back," said Jim Winkler.

"What do you say, John?" asked Will Sourwine.

"I wouldn't say anything much," John Mack replied, quietly, "except to ask Jim where he'd go."

"Oh, I'd find somewheres else to go, all right," Jim declared in great confidence. "Plenty of places 'd be glad to have us, and——"

"Where?" persisted John Mack, definitely.

"Well, I won't say right now, but——"

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"That's just the point," John Mack said. "Now, you men can do what you like, but I'm going to ship back to Merkel. I've got some colts there I'd have to move if I changed. The water's good, the rent is cheap, and the location is handy to Hot Springs, New Orleans, Churchill Downs or anywhere else we may want to ship for the races. Railroad connections good, too. It's the best winter quarters in the country, I think, and the cheapest. So I'm going to ship back there. It will take more than a nine-hole golf course to keep me away from Merkel."

"Cheap, hey? Hell, they's a lot of places——" Jim Winkler tried to dispute one point, but John Mack did not let him get very far.

"It costs only about half as much to winter at Merkel as anywhere else that I've been able to find, and I've been wintering horses for eighteen years."

"Yeah," snarled Jim, angry at being called on each of his bluffs in succession. "And yet I s'pose after all that time in the horse game y'd go back there and associate with a bunch of old women playin' gawlf! Damn' piddlin' game, I call it. Gawlf!"

"There are worse things," John Mack said.

"S'pose next y'll be sayin' y've played it, hey?" demanded Jim, hotly.

"Have you?" asked John Mack, simply.

"Me? Hell, no!" exploded Jim Winkler. "And that ain't all, by a long shot."

Old Man Thomas and Will Sourwine let out a roar and stoutly affirmed that Jim's implication went double for them. They'd be durned, they declared, if they'd ever be caught knocking a little ball around with a stick. Brown Simms wanted to line up with them, and did line up with them in sympathy. But Brown had to remember John Mack's testimony on the economy of wintering at Merkel.

AFTER a while the storm subsided to a smoldering state, and all the Merkel contingent shipped back home for the winter. Fourteen horsemen, with three dozen swipes, exercise boys and hangers-on, and a hundred-odd horses, descended on the town. There was blood in the eyes of all except the horses, and even they looked askance at the strange goings-on in the Fair Grounds. In two days the racing community was organized for the winter rest. And then golf, an incidental irritant for the time being, once more grabbed the horse world by the tail.

Some witless golfing enthusiast teed off for the first hole inopportunely, and proceeded to get off a beautiful, screaming line drive. If he had hooked, or sliced, or pulled or topped, in accordance with any of his usual habits, nothing would have happened. But his drive was worthy of a Hagen.

"Fore!" he yelled, in horror, when it was too late.

His hard-driven ball caught a darky exercise boy on the side of the head just above the ear, and knocked him off a colt he was galloping. He landed on the other ear, and the surprised colt went on his way. The golfer hurried toward the track, but even as he arrived a crowd of track hangers-on, black and white, was gathering. The little darky jumped up, rubbing his head, and looked about excitedly. Then he spied the luckless golfer, and rushed for him. The crowd fell in behind, and it looked like a lynching. Nothing but a fence and a fifty-yard handicap prevented murder.

The crowd presently gave up the chase, and, with the little darky, moved toward Brown Simms's stable. On the way Old Man Thomas fell in with the procession, and assumed command.

"Hey, Brown!" he yelled, as they came to the barn. "Come out and see what's happened. One of these damn' gawlfers has blame near killed one of yore niggers!"

"Yeah, and the colt's run away," added a man in the crowd.

"So'd the durn gawlfuh," chimed in a swipe.

Brown Simms came out. He took in the situation as coolly as he could in the face of so much excitement, and then declared that by cracky he'd see if such things were going to be permitted. Followed by the whole party, he stalked down to the Winkler stable, rounded up Jim, paraded past the Sourwine stables and found Will, and then headed for John Mack's quarters. Old Man Thomas banged on the door of Mack's stall office, and Brown Simms addressed John Mack as he came outdoors.

"Well, here's a purty kettle o' fish," he exclaimed. "Your damn' game of gawlf has durn near killed one of my darkies. Ridin' a colt, he was, and a damn' gawlfer knocked

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him right off. Ball took him right alongside the head. Wonder it hadn't of brained him!"

"Hurt the ball any?" queried John Mack, before he sensed the crowd's extreme resentment.

"Ball? Hell, it's a wonder it hadn't of killed the boy!" exclaimed Brown Simms.

"Hurt the ball?" demanded Old Man Thomas, indignantly. "No, but I'll say we'd have hurt that damn' gawlfer, if we'd have ketched him."

"It wasn't his fault," said John Mack, unable to take the thing seriously.

"I suppose y'll be saying, next, that it was my fault for owning a horse a boy could ride on the track, for getting in the way of the ball, hey?" asked Brown Simms.

"No, I was thinking of the poor zany that laid out the course," said John Mack. "He shouldn't have placed the tee on one side of the track, and the hole on the other side."

"Oh, don't stand here tellin' us about the game of gawlf," protested Will Sourwine. "What we want to know is, what are we gona do about it?"

"We're gona lynch the next bird 'at tries to play gawlf——"

"Oh, no, we're not, Jim Winkler," interposed John Mack, apparently understanding at last how angry the crowd was. "We're going to settle this thing in an orderly way."

"Well, how?" insisted Will Sourwine.

"We're going down to see the mayor," said John Mack. "And we might as well go right now. Shall we all go, or hadn't we better appoint a committee?"

"Gona see him?" growled Jim Winkler. "Write him another letter. Mebbe he'd answer it, this time."

"No committee," protested Old Man Thomas. "We'll all go."

"That's the stuff," yelled the crowd, thrilling to more adventure and gladly oblivious of the lazy demands of their varied horsemanly tasks.

Picking up the darky, who could perfectly well have walked, they fell into step once more behind Old Man Thomas and Brown Simms, who walked arm in arm with John Mack, striding along between them. Will Sourwine and Jim Winkler marched at their heels. And the little exercise boy groaned and cried in time to the tread of his bearers. John Mack asked Brown Simms if he could not make the blame boy shut up, but Brown was too busy trying not to burst completely with indignation to pay any attention to the question.

There was quite a demonstration in front of the mayor's office, and a big crowd gathered. Old Man Thomas volunteered to bring the mayor out, and did so, bristling with two parts importance to one of indignation. The Hon. T. Donovan Parker, Mayor of Merkel, was a politician. He temporized. To put it plainly, he stalled. He listened gravely to the story, as told severally and simultaneously by Old Man Thomas, Brown Simms, and Will Sourwine, with illustrations by Jim Winkler, and incidental music by the little colored boy.

"Gentlemen," cried the Hon. T. Donovan Parker, in his most gracious manner, "this affair causes me a great deal of pain."

"Here, too," yelled Jim Winkler.

"It is too bad it should have happened," continued the mayor. "I am sure that I would do nothing, that no citizen of Merkel would do anything, to injure the racing establishments that have brought fame to the fair name of our city. We realize what you have done for us, and we are not ungrateful."

"Why'n't yuh answer John Mack's letter?" demanded Jim Winkler, sullenly championing the same letter he had derided.

"AS FOR the matter of golf," the mayor said, "hundreds of our citizens wish to take up the game. They are not, as you men are, out in the open air. Their health demands outdoor recreation. The city owns the Fair Grounds, and it is the only park we have. We can not afford another. Under the circumstances——"

"Aw, why don't you say sumpin?" growled Jim Winkler.

"What I have to say is this," continued the Hon. T. Donovan Parker. "We are sorry this has happened, and we will see that the injured boy is well cared for. We will arrange that golfing shall not be done when you gentlemen are busy using the grounds."

"Nor any other time," said Jim Winkler, aloud.

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"I am honored by your call on me today," said T. Donovan Parker, "and I appreciate your feelings. But manifestly, we cannot all discuss it at once. I therefore suggest that you gentlemen name a committee of three of your number, to confer with me and the chairman of the city's park board. I shall be glad to have your committee come into my office."

This polite address left the crowd rather flat. All it could do was stand around and mutter, drowning out the little darky, who was now throat-weary and very headachy, while Will Sourwine, Jim Winkler, Brown Simms and the rest, organized a committee to confer with the mayor. Brown Simms, because it was his boy and his colt, and Old Man Thomas, because he seemed to know more about it than anybody else, were the first two choices for places on the committee. Will Sourwine proposed Jim Winkler as the third, and Jim declared for Will, but Brown Simms declared John Mack was the man, that he should, in fact, be chairman and spokesman.

"I'll do it if you want me to," agreed John Mack, "but I'm not looking for trouble."

"Hell, it'll be no trouble at all!" sneered Jim Winkler. "You know all about gawlf, don't yuh?"

John Mack, Old Man Thomas and Brown Simms went into the office of the mayor. The crowd waited. Presently Jimmy Burns, President of the Merkel National Bank and chairman of the city's park board, pushed his way through the gathering and into the mayor's office. The conference was long. Old Man Thomas exploded, and Brown Simms unbosomed himself.

"Some of the boys would like to know," he said aggressively to the Hon. T. Donovan Parker, "why you didn't answer John Mack's letter."

"I'll answer that question," spoke up Jimmy Burns.

"Where do you get off, to butt in?" asked Old Man Thomas.

"I asked Mr. Parker not to answer the letter, but to wait until you'd all come back here," said Burns, paying no attention to Old Man Thomas. "We're going to play golf, see? But I was afraid if he told you so, some of you might not come back. And I wanted you to come back. Because——"

He paused to reflect an instant. "Because some of you owe us some money from last year."

Old Man Thomas flushed, and Brown Simms looked out the window.

"But that was no reason," interposed John Mack, speaking for the first time, "why the mayor should not have replied to my letter."

"No, but my asking him not to was a good reason," declared Burns.

"I don't see why," persisted John Mack, stolidly.

"Hell! Mr. Mack, don't ask so many embarrassing questions," said the Hon. T. Donovan Parker, getting down off his mayoral dignity. "You're going to have me blushin' like Old Man Thomas, here, in a minute."

The conference broke up right then, so far as any dignified and restrained, albeit heated, attitude was concerned. Every man present laughed long and heartily.

"YOU'RE a fine bunch of fish!" exclaimed Jimmy Burns, when the laugh had worn itself out. "You claim to be sports. We rent you the Fair Grounds and the barns cheap, and we keep up the track for you, and give you good water. You get your feed cheap, and quarters and grub for next to nothing. About all we get out of it is glory, and now and then a tip on a hot one. Yet you want us to do everything, and you fellows, nothing. Now then, we're going to play golf out there, and you men can like it or not, as you please. See?"

"But if we leave," began John Mack, "the city will lose about three hundred population, the grocery, clothing and feed business, and the publicity in the newspapers, and the bank deposits. All this the city loses, in exchange for a golf course, which is a poor course, at best."

"Oh, is that so?" challenged Jimmy Burns, flaring up quickly. "What do you know about it?"

"Nothing much," replied Mack, "except that it must have been a ninny who planned a fairway at right angles to the home-stretch."

"I suppose you think the fairway ought to be right down the track?" demanded Jimmy Burns, who had laid out the course himself.

"Well, no, I don't believe I should say

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that," John Mack said. "But it is a rotten course. And it is all you get to make up for the loss of the horses, the horsemen, the business and advertising."

"You people give me a pain. You claim to be sports," exclaimed the scrappy Burns. "Let me make a proposition. Mr. Mack thinks he knows something about a golf course. Suppose we do this: We'll name a player, and you sports pick one, and we'll play this thing off. How's that? It's our ground, and we can do as we like, but we'll play for it, see?"

"Sure," added the mayor, "and if we win, we play golf, except when your horses are in training."

"And if we win?" demanded Brown Simms and Old Man Thomas.

"No golf," snapped Jimmy Burns. "What do you say?"

Old Man Thomas and Brown Simms looked at each other in dismay. Before either could read the other's thoughts, if any, the doughty chairman of their committee had spoken.

"Agreed," said John Mack, quietly.

"That's the stuff," ejaculated Jimmy Burns, jumping up and reaching out a hand to shake with Mack.

"Hey, wait a minute, wait," said Old Man Thomas.

"Say! Hold on here," demanded Brown Simms.

"I've committed the committee," said John Mack, winking furtively at Old Man Thomas. But the old man, blind in his anger, saw nothing but red. John Mack thereupon turned his eyes upon Brown Simms, and winked hard and deliberately, nodding his ruddy head for emphasis. And Brown Simms, uttering a several-syllabled cuss word, paused in bewilderment.

"Well," he said, finally, "mebbe—why, I guess I'll stick with John Mack on this thing."

"But, but, but," sputtered Old Man Thomas, like a flivver's open cutout.

"That makes the committee two to one," said John Mack. "We will meet your offer, Mr. Burns. When shall we name our men?"

"Day after to-morrow, in this office," snapped Burns, after calculating for a moment.

"All right, let's go," John Mack said, rising. Brown Simms hurried along with him, to find out what John Mack had in mind. Old Man Thomas stumbled resentfully along in the rear, swearing and muttering under his breath.

THE news spread rapidly. Fair Grounds folks thought John Mack had lost his mind. Jim Winkler tried to organize a crowd to lynch, not the golfer who had knocked the darky off the colt, but John Mack himself. By night, the big sandy fellow had not a friend left in the horse world at Merkel. But during the night, some of the horsemen communed with Brown Simms and Old Man Thomas, and they changed their tune.

Next morning, when the story of Jimmy Burns's strategy got around town among the coming golfers, these same golfers were delighted to pick up bets here and there. Those horsemen who were flush, and a few who could beg or borrow, circulated quietly around with a little money. Jim Winkler managed to place fifty dollars, although he did it grudgingly and knowing darned well that the whole thing was only monkey business.

Jimmy Burns heard all day long of the easy money that his townsmen were picking up, and chuckled as freely and heartily as a banker in his office may chuckle. But at dinner that evening he suddenly quit chuckling. Suppose these fool horsemen ran in a ringer, a real golfer on him? Suppose they hired a professional?

The horsemen seemed to be betting their heads—Jimmy Burns jumped up from his dinner and almost ran down-town to the telegraph office. Having already established his opinion of the horsemen's sportsmanship, Jimmy proceeded blithely to wire the professional he had engaged for the Merkel course, asking him if he could come down at once, prepared to play. He'd show these cheap sports they couldn't put anything over on him. Next morning he received a reply, and went snapping into the meeting at the office of the Hon. T. Donovan Parker, with the golf, horse and financial worlds in his vest pocket.

"Well, here we are again," he announced. "Are you men all ready to name your golfer?"

"Yes," said John Mack. "The boys have agreed to have me play for them."

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"Wha-at?" Jimmy Burns asked, surprised. "You—say, listen, we don't want to make a farce out of this thing."

"Maybe that will be up to you folks," replied John Mack, quietly, the while Old Man Thomas and Brown Simms exchanged a surreptitious wink.

"But you don't know anything about golf," protested Jimmy Burns.

"Don't have to. It's not much of a game," declared John Mack.

"Not a real game, hey?" demanded Jimmy Burns. "Is that so? Well, we'll just show you an exhibition of it that will change your minds. Our man is Jock McDougal," and he looked about him with an air of triumph.

"Never heard of the party," said Old Man Thomas.

"Does he live in Merkel?" Brown Simms asked.

"Nothing was said of his living here," said Burns. "We made no terms on that point. But he does live here. At least, he has rented a house and is going to move here right away."

"I see," said John Mack. "Your new professional?"

"Yes, Jock McDougal, from St. Louis, and he's good," Burns explained, with condescension. "He's going to teach us to play the game. Maybe he'll give you a few pointers, too—after the match." And he chuckled to himself.

"When will he be here?" John Mack asked.

"To-night. This is Friday," said Jimmy Burns. "Suppose we play Sunday morning. Eighteen holes, match play."

"But y've only got nine holes out there," protested Old Man Thomas. "Counting the one behind the paddock."

"Play around twice," Jimmy Burns said, smiling at the Old Man's ignorance. "But Mr. Mack," he asked, as he rose to depart for the bank, "what do you know about golf?"

"Oh, I've played—some," said John Mack. "Not lately, though."

"That reminds me," Old Man Thomas spoke up. "Hadn't y' oughta get some clubs and knock the ball around, to sorta practise up?"

"Golf," replied John Mack, "is a good deal like swimming, or skating. You do it better when you've not been at it for a while."

SUNDAY morning saw a bigger crowd at the Fair Grounds than any Saturday afternoon's racing had known in years and years. It was well understood by this time that the town's new professional had arrived and would play. Nobody in town could dream of his being beaten by the old horseman, John Mack. The horse crowd kept quiet in the face of the townsmen's taunts, waiting for money to talk and then employing the only form of repartee that they knew.

"How much?" they asked, doggedly, and put up their bills and silver. They did not know a great deal about this fool game of gawlf, but John Mack was their man and Brown Simms and Old Man Thomas had said they oughta stick by him. Jim Winkler said this gawlf business convinced him Mack was a nut, though he had always suspected it anyhow.

"Here they come, here they come," was the yell at ten o'clock. Jimmy Burns drove into the grounds in his sport roadster, wheeled into the middle of the crowd near the first tee, down by the last turn of the track, and came to a brilliant stop. He climbed out of the car with all the dignity that may be used in dismounting from a cramped seating arrangement, and then lent a hand to his companion. Jock McDougal got out.

Another yell went up, and then a derisive laugh. Jock, a bow-legged, red-faced little Scot of middle age, was dressed for golf as it is played in our best circles. But his knickers and wool-clad legs brought him an uproar. His face turned even redder in resentment.

"Don't mind these roughnecks," said Jimmy Burns. "They don't know anything. Hey, Mr. Thomas! Come over here and meet Mr. McDougal. Mr. McDougal, Mr. Thomas."

Old Man Thomas shook hands, very gingerly, with Jock McDougal. Then Old Man Thomas turned around and asked the crowd to keep quiet. While he was making his appeal, long John Mack came striding through the crowd, carrying a big bag of golf clubs. The bag was battered and dusty, and the club heads were rusty. He paid no attention to the crowd, but thrust his way to the side of Jimmy Burns and addressed him.

"Well, Mr. Burns, are you ready?"

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"Sure, sure—why, here's Mr. Mack, now, Mr. McDougal. Mr. Mack, meet Mr. McDougal," said Jimmy Burns.

Little Jock McDougal was a picture as he reached up to shake hands with long John Mack. His face, already crimson, turned purple as he gazed upward at the ruddy, lean face of the old horseman. He tried to say something, but could only stutter.

"Glad to see you, Mr. McDougal," said John Mack. "Well, are we ready?"

"Sure!" exclaimed the alert Jimmy Burns. "I've got a box of balls here, new ones. I'll just carry it along, but help yourselves. Shall we toss for the honor?"

"Not a bit of it," retorted John Mack. "Mr. McDougal is the visitor. He may shoot first."

And before the crowd really knew what was going on, there being no parade past the stand, no bugle nor any other familiar formality, the match had begun. Jimmy Burns stepped up on the tee, pointed out the first hole, across the track and over beyond the swampy ground, built up and tucked into the far turn of the track. He asked the crowd to keep off the course, and to follow behind the players. The horse fans drew off to one side, at the right, behind and beside the tee, and the townspeople lined up opposite them. Jock McDougal, biting his lip, pigeon-toed up to the tee, dropped a ball, bent over and built it up on a bit of sand, and then rose to address it. He sighted the course, waggled his driver a few times, took a practise spin, and then settled for his drive.

"HE'S cert'n'y a queer-lookin' fish, if there ever was one, hey?" said Jim Winkler, aloud.

A tremendous guffaw greeted this sally. Jimmy Burns was horrified, and bitterly angry. Especially was this the case when, beginning his swing just as Jim Winkler spoke, Jock McDougal topped his drive and smashed his ball into the turf only a few yards in front of the tee. He was for diving into the crowd, dragging Jim Winkler out, and beating him up, but while he was meditating his course the crowd broke loose in another yell, this time one of derision for Jock's poorly hit ball. And then John Mack took command of the situation.

"Here, you fellows," he shouted, standing up on the tee and holding up a gaunt arm. "Let's have quiet, please. Let me explain that in this game we never shout or laugh at an opponent, nor talk while he is shooting. It is not fair. It is liable to spoil his play. Let's be decent in this thing."

Without saying more, he dropped his own ball, knelt over to put it on a pyramid, and then rose to address it. Just as he placed his club head alongside the ball, however, a great cheer broke loose. Jim Winkler was leading the boys in an imitation college yell. John Mack left his stance, and again raised his hand for silence.

"Boys," he said, "that's mighty nice of you. But in golf, no cheering is done. Let's have it quiet all the way around."

The crowd became silent, and all eyes were on long John Mack, the old horseman essaying golf. Most of the crowd watched the ball, although many eyed his head and others, his hands. But Jock McDougal, still thoroughly angry and his face a fiery red, fastened his gaze on John's big left foot. He was watching it so hard that he did not see what happened to the ball. Long John smashed the dirt two inches in front of his ball, broke the club shaft into bits, and rolled the ball only a few feet off the tee. The crowd, especially the horse fans, groaned. Jimmy Burns tried in vain to repress a smile.

"Old fool figures golf's a pipe, don't he?" Burns asked himself.

"This club's an old one," said John Mack, to Jock McDougal, as he picked up the remnants and cast them aside. "Wood's dried out. I'll use the brassie, or maybe an iron."

"Decent of you, I'm sure," muttered Jock McDougal, as he set off down the course beside John Mack. He alone, in all the gathering, knew that the big fellow had purposely spoiled his drive.

"Hell, the old fool don't know any more about gawlf than I do," muttered Jim Winkler. "I told them all along he was kiddin' us."

Jock McDougal, his gaze again glued to John Mack's left foot, stood aside for his opponent to shoot. The long fellow, with all his followers hanging breathless on his motion to make sure whether he knew

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anything about the game after all, took a mid-iron from his bag, dropped the other clubs carelessly behind him, and stepped into the ball with a mighty swing. His shot was a beauty, clearing the fences and the track on the rise, and winging far into the infield before it dropped to roll and bound for additional distance. Jimmy Burns could hardly believe his eyes.

"Accident," he muttered.

And then McDougal, taking his eyes from John's left foot and following the ball, made his own shot. It, too, was pretty, and almost as long as Mack's. The crowd swarmed in behind them, through the gates and over the fences, across the track and into the infield, and the fight was on.

Fight? They halved the first hole in four. Long John Mack played the second hole, across the infield pond, over a hedge and to the green tucked in around the corner of the judges' stand, in a perfect three. McDougal encountered a hazard in the form of a hedge and water jump placed for the training of steeple-chasers, and needed a five.

"Lucky," said Jimmy Burns to himself.

Then John Mack took four, one under par, on the difficult third hole, as against McDougal's six, the bow-legged Jock slicing his drive and sending the ball against the clubhouse roof to carom into a clump of trees.

"Mack must have horseshoes in both hip pockets," said Jimmy Burns, confidently. But his fellow townsmen were in dismay, and the horse fans were jubilant.

Now two up, John Mack sent a whale of a long and lofty drive sailing true for the fourth hole. The course here followed the first turn of the track, running outside it and well past the second turn. Local amateurs tried two shots, to stay outside the track, and they held their breath as John Mack's great drive carried over the track to drop close up for an easy approach and a three. John Mack got his three. Jock McDougal, still preoccupied with the big fellow's left foot, turned in another five, chiefly because his approach shot hit the barrier upright at the six furlongs starting place.

THE horse crowd began to gibe and laugh, behind hands, at the townspeople, who, for their part, lost heart and hope. Their money was up, but they could see no sense in fighting for it. They felt they had been framed. Jimmy Burns presented an interesting study in dejection. His jaunty, cocksure air disappeared and he was swearing every step. He, too, had bet on McDougal. But worse than that, he had staked the future of the game in Merkel on this match.

He groaned as he saw long John Mack once again step into the ball with a resounding crack that sent it across the infield toward the next hole. It looked as if the ball never would drop in its flight.

So it went to and including the tenth hole, when John Mack was nine up. There was no fault to find with little Jock McDougal. He swung along in perfect form himself, having no more clubhouses to hit, and playing par golf as steadily as a clock.

John Mack did not say a word. Jock McDougal muttered, now and then, a quiet compliment on the big man's game, but did nothing else but play golf and eye John Mack's left foot. He did not speak to any one in the crowd. The horse fans rioted through the ranks of the townspeople, asking them to pay their bets, to get a new gawlfer, and to kiss their linxes goodby. And then came the climax.

"Well, what do you say, big fellow?" asking Jimmy Burns, stepping up to John Mack at the eleventh hole. "I'll take my medicine. You play a beautiful game. I never saw such driving. But is it necessary to play the rest of it? What do you say, Mr. McDougal, is it any use?"

"Use, use?" echoed Jock McDougal, his face burning brightly. "Mon, d'you know who 'tis that you've asked me to play against?"

"John Mack, the only horseman in Merkel with enough sense to make money and bank it," retorted Jimmy Burns, sullenly.

"John Mack? Hoots, an' it's Red Johnnie himself, come to life again," exclaimed little Jock. "And as for it's bein' any use, I'll say it's not. Nor has been, any time. It's never any use to play par gaw'f again' Red Johnnie."

"Whaddayuh mean, 'Red Johnnie' ?" demanded Jimmy Burns, resentfully.

"An' y' never hearrid?" queried the little fellow, amazed. Then he turned reproachfully to John Mack. "Red Johnnie Mackintosh, the longest hitter in Scotland, an' but for two things, the finest gaw'fer we

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ever had. Johnnie," he asked, gazing up at the tall fellow, "why d'you no' weegle the left foot ony mair?"

"A horse cured me of that," said John Mack, grinning. "Stepped on it, and since that the left foot hasn't been playful enough to spoil a shot for me. Besides, I've not tried to give it a chance."

"What?" exclaimed Jock McDougal.

"Haven't played in twenty years."

"And that other, that other fault——" began Jock McDougal.

"The temper?" laughed John Mack, aloud. "Haven't lost it in ten years. Can't handle horses with a temper, and I swallowed mine, I guess."

"Mon, mon, it's beautiful," declared little Jock McDougal. And then he turned upon Jimmy Burns, as if that individual had done him a personal injury. "Y' see, Misterrr Burrns, I used for to caddy when Red Johnnie was playing his great game. If it hadna been for his temper, and for his weeglin' his left foot, he'd 'a' been champion of the Islands, time after time."

"That's good, that is," growled the disgruntled Jimmy Burns, forgetting his own estimate of the horsemen's sportsmanship, back at that meeting in the mayor's office. "Nobody said anything to me about his having been a great golfer. That's a fair way to play, that is."

"NOBODY said anything to us, about your playing your professional," retorted John Mack, a smile on his ruddy face. "Did we accuse you of playing foul? But, gentlemen, let me suggest something."

He lowered his voice and spoke earnestly to both men for a moment. Subsequent playing may give a line on the conversation. Despite the fact Mack was nine up, and eight to go, he and McDougal continued their match. Mack won the next hole, and then, after teeing the ball, motioned to Brown Simms.

"Brown," he said, "come up here and hit one for me."

"I don't wanta hit the darn ball," said Brown.

"Come on up and hit it," John insisted. He handed a club to the reluctant Brown Simms, who had never touched a golf stick before. And Brown, though hesitating to make a show of himself, agreed to try a shot. He surprised himself and the crowd by getting off a fairish drive.

"What d'yuh call that club?" he asked.

After explaining it was a brassie, John Mack finished the hole. At the next tee he called up Will Sourwine. And Will, too, managed to hit the ball several yards down the course.

"Not such a bad game, at that," said Will, sticking out his chest. "I could play it."

Again John finished, and at the next hole asked Old Man Thomas to try it. The old man absolutely and positively refused.

"Not on your tintype," he declared, stoutly. "I'm too durned old to take up any such fool games as gawlf."

"Hey! Lemme try that thing," demanded Jim Winkler. "I'll knock the blame cover offa the ball."

Jim grabbed the club, spit on his hands, tightened his grip and let swing. He missed, by a foot. His friends whooped. He swore, and before John Mack could intervene, tried again. The crowd yelled.

"Take another one," said John Mack, generously. "We can afford to lose this hole."

And then Jim Winkler did hit the ball. He landed with enough steam to send it three hundred yards or more, but he scooped a shovelful of dirt with it, and sent the ball almost straight up in the air. And then he swore again and the crowd laughed. His ball, coming down from the clouds, landed about ten yards in front of him to spin tantalizingly and die. Brown Simms and Will Sourwine clapped each other on the back and pointed in derision at the redoubtable Jim, who swore some more.

"Where could we get some of them clubs?" Will Sourwine asked Brown Simms, in a low tone, behind his hand. He hoped no one but Brown heard him, but before Brown could answer, Jim Winkler spoke up.

"I'll find out," he said confidently. "And I'll get some new ones. These damn' clubs must be twenty-five years old."

The match? John Mack came home six up in the eighteen, after all this foolery. Do we play the game now, all of us, all the time, here at the Fair Grounds? Yes, but hell's fire, as Jim Winkler says, we'd oughta have eighteen holes, instead of only nine.

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A Novel Complete in This Issue

The Mangus Cheavey Embezzlement

South of Panama, Where Presidents Preside, and Secret Service Still is Secret—Adventure and Humor a-Plenty

By Reginald Wright Kauffman

Illustrations by Sidney H. Riesenberg

THE President embraced the short, puffy figure of his departing guest.

"My good, good friend," he cried. "I do not know how I should survive without you!" He added, as if by way of afterthought: "Nor how the Republic can adequately reward you."

The stout guest freed himself gently. One hand stroked the disarranged bosom of his dress-shirt; the fingers of the other fumbled at his drooping gray mustache.

"I live for those who love me," he murmured; "I serve the common good."

His Excellency himself held open the door from the balcony on which they had been drinking their after-dinner coffee. In the room beyond stood a soldier-servant bearing the guest's silk hat. The guest ambled toward him.

"Good night, your Excellency," he said.

"God be with you," said the President. "My heart is yours, Don Cipriano."

He waited until the room was empty. Then he returned to the twilight of the balcony.

"There are days," he said to someone in the shadow, "when Don Cipriano does not possess my entire confidence."

He looked down, across the rail, at the Plaza de la Constitución. A military band was playing on the central platform that encircled the fountain. Lights sparkled from the score of cafés, and at the tables on the pavements in front of them citizens and soldiers drank their wine and chatted with the ladies of the capital. A cooling air blew from the harbor, and overhead the stars hung large and low.

His Excellency Don Ricardo Ayalo Ruiz was a dapper man and lithe. His pointed, black beard never hid the vivid red of his full lips; and when he smiled, he displayed rows of little sharp teeth.

He was smiling now, as he lit a fresh cigarette from the stub of its predecessor. He resumed his wicker easy-chair beside the table.

"When the time comes," he mused, "for Don Cipriano to think he can succeed me, he will hire somebody to put a bullet into my head. I am beginning to believe he thinks that time at hand. Yes, decidedly there are days when our good friend Barboza does not possess my entire confidence."

A full-foliaged vine draped the farther end of the balcony. There something white and reclining was just visible. It laughed now: a merry, silver, mocking laugh.

"Nonsense!" it said. "Often I have heard you declare that Don Cipriano was the very model chief of a Secret Service."

It was a woman's voice, clear as a bell, and as cold. It was the voice of a woman professionally trained to music.

"Not a Secret Service," the President suavely corrected: "an Intelligence Department. The useful intelligence department looks outward only; when it begins

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to develop an eye in the back of its head, its virtue decreases."

"My dear Ricardo, are you dreaming again of going a-traveling?"

"The yacht is in the harbor. Would you come with me?"

"This is a very amusing city."

"Would you come with me to cities more amusing?"

"No."

"To New York?"

"Thrice three-times no!"

"First to New York—on business, for a day. Then to the Riviera—on pleasure, and forever?"

The notes of a Viennese waltz drifted up from the Plaza. A half-minute passed. Then the voice of the shadows spoke:

"Why at all New York?"

"There are certain bank-deposits there."

"The American authorities would seize you."

"They could not: I should be a political refugee."

"Not unless first there was a revolution."

His Excellency snapped the fingers of both hands. "A revolution! We may trust Don Cipriano to see to that. No mere *coup d'état:* our loyal Jouanne and his Guards will fight for us. Ah, it will be a genuine affair: blood will flow out there in this pretty Plaza de la Constitución. And while it flows, we shall be *en route.*"

"When?"

Don Ruiz made a gesture that meant "What matter?" *"Quién c sabe?"* he replied. "Tomorrow—next week—when Don Cipriano thinks he can depose me. Besides, I cannot wait forever: that conscientious Trujillo is becoming too inquisitive—as if prying into the business transactions of a President were among the duties of a Minister of Finance! It certainly must not be more than a month hence."

The lady laughed at the picture thus presented. However, in this selfish world, the most disinterested must sometimes think of themselves.

"And you want me with you—truly?" Her voice cooed provocatively.

"Can a man," asked His Excellency, "live without his heart?"

"I have heard those words before, dear Ricardo. You want me to accompany you: very good. But in what capacity?"

The President coughed. The cough ended in words: "As my wife."

"Then," she said slowly, "I must have the title before we embark."

Ever so slightly he fidgeted. "A public wedding might precipitate matters. The imbecile populace does not love you."

"As secret a wedding as you please, Ricardo; but a true wedding—and a preliminary marriage-settlement."

The fidget became a squirm. "If that can be arranged——"

"I shall attend to it—if I agree to go. But will you, at the last, be willing to leave your country to Don Cipriano?"

"When I have squeezed the orange, I do not care what pig devours the rind. Now, my dearest soul: your answer."

The reclining figure hummed the air of the waltz.

"Well?" demanded the President.

"The Riviera is expensive," sighed the lady; "and forever is such a long, long time, my friend. No, I do not think that I am enamored of your journey."

The President bit his lip, cogitated—resolved.

"Have I ever," he whispered, "shown you the executive wine-cellars? The wine-cellars of the Presidential Palace of Catamarca abut the vaults of the National Treasury."

WHILE President Ruiz and his valued Secret Service Chief were dining in Catamarca, two other presidents, and the son of one of them, were dining together in New York. These other executives were T. Stanwood Atwater—among other things head of the Travelers' and Tailors' Trust Co.—and J. L. Kent, originator and guiding genius of the Independence Surety, Bonding and Indemnification Corporation, which specializes in the insurance of financial concerns against robbery and embezzlement—and in ungratefully catching and imprisoning the robbers and embezzlers to whose operations it owes its existence.

The scene was the dining-room of Atwater's house in East Seventy-third Street; the time was six seconds after the butler had withdrawn, leaving President Atwater free to produce the last bottle but one of his late father's Napoleon brandy. The banker looked like Chauncey M. Depew ten years ago; John Kent like Will H. Hays

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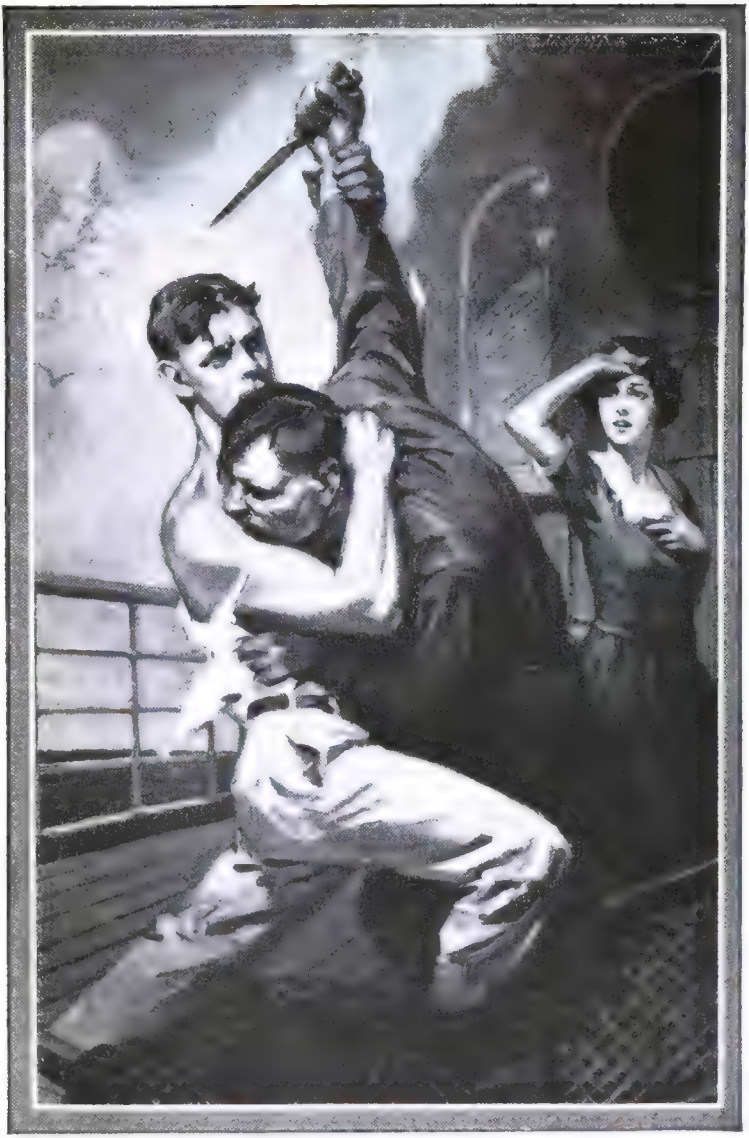

Buster covered the space between them in three leaps. . . . Crooked fingers tore his shirt from neck to waist-line. The woman screamed.

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ten years hence, and the six-foot-two gridiron figure of "Buster" Kent looked as if it were bored to death and wanted to run away.

"What do you think of *that?*" inquired Atwater as he held a glass to his pink nose.

"I think," said Kent, "that if you'd let us bond your butler, you wouldn't have to hide it." He always twitted the other's old-fashioned prejudice against any form of insurance.

Atwater grunted. "If Thomas drank my brandy, you couldn't replace it."

"If he knew he'd go to jail, Thomas wouldn't drink it."

"He's been with me ever since I built this house."

Buster Kent raised his blue eyes from a contemplation of the liquor. "Hadn't Mangus Cheavey," he asked, "been with you ever since you founded the Travelers' and Tailors'?"

When they were together, the seniors paid little attention to this young fellow just graduated from his university; it was the daily complaint of the elder Kent that Buster, for his part, never paid much attention to business. The interruption consequently startled the host and delighted the father.

"The boy's got you there, Stan!" Kent chuckled.

Atwater didn't see the joke. Cheavey was the sole casualty of his later career, and a tremendous casualty he had proved. A decade of faithful service and regular advancement had been followed by a long period of adroit misappropriation, wholly unsuspected; then, when matters could not be bettered, this under-officer of the trust-company perpetrated an impartially sweeping *coup*—and disappeared as completely as the rabbit that a conjurer returns to the hat from which he has produced it. Like so many of the really large embezzlements, Cheavey's had been sedulously kept from the newspapers, but scores of thief-catchers had secretly scoured the world for him for five years in vain.

"Young man," said Stanwood Atwater, "if we'd had a policy in your father's concern, that concern'd simply have been out the face-value of it."

"But you people," countered the elder Kent, "would have been that much to the good."

"We might have got something back on the bonds; but there's the fundamental error of your business, John: you confuse price with value. You could have paid us the price of the jewels—just as we did to their owners—but that wouldn't have satisfied the owners, the renters of those safe-deposit boxes. Nothing would satisfy them but the jewels themselves."

"What jewels?" demanded Buster.

"Mrs. Van Astren's rubies—she offered $25,000 reward for 'em; Jimmie Sutphen's wife's whole outfit; the Charlie Wests—oh, a dozen or more!" His face grew darker. "And Sarah's pearls." . . .

"YOUR own wife?" asked John Kent.

"Certainly. Couldn't I trust my own vaults with my own wife's valuables? Good Heavens, John, you don't mean *you've* believed all this gossip about her! You haven't thought she was going to end by getting a divorce at her age and weight? She lives in Paris because she's sore at me for losing that pearl necklace I gave her on our twenty-fifth anniversary—and I can hardly blame her: there wasn't its equal in America."

"Weren't they ever"—this was Buster again—"ever offered on the market?"

"If they had been, don't you think we'd have got 'em? Every pawnbroker and jeweler in the world has a description."

"Couldn't they cut the rubies and such things?"

"Cheavey wouldn't. He got away with enough cash and convertible paper—which he converted, all right—to be rich for life."

"I think I heard something about his having married a movie-star. Perhaps he gave them to her, Mr. Atwater."

The banker laughed mirthlessly. "Go ask her! He left the poor woman high and dry. She's pathetically loyal—never'd tell the detectives anything—but it's plain as the nose on your face she hasn't anything to tell. Of course we've had her watched: she'd too old for leads now, and she's hanging around studios and picking up odd jobs."

John Kent swung back to the main theme: "We'd have caught the man for you."

"We've had three of the best detective-agencies working independently for five years, and nothing doing. Could your company beat that?"

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"Mr. Atwater," Buster suggested, "I'll make you a sporting proposition: if I deliver Mangus Cheavey at the Travelers' and Tailors' within the next six months—him and the jewels—you'll take out one of our minimum policies; if I don't, we'll give you a ten-year maximum policy free."

"What's that?" cried the young man's father. "We'll not——"

"Then *I* will. I've got a little money of my own, you know, Mr. Atwater: my Aunt Florence left it to me."

John Kent would have protested again, but the banker forestalled him: here was a chance to end his old argument with his old friend.

"I'll go you, Buster," he promised. "I won't take anything if you lose, but if you deliver the goods, I'll make it a perpetual maximum." . . .

THE lady who had dined with the President of Catamarca drew a Catamarcan mantilla so far over her head as to leave observable only a beautifully formed nose and the dark contours of perfect cheeks and, gesturing denial to the waiting servant in the room beyond the balcony, made an unattended progress downstairs.

Under the full light from the great chandelier of the main hallway, stood a slim gentleman of middle-age, all fierce mustaches and bristling hair and the uniform of a colonel in the national army. He bowed by a creaking hinge at the middle.

"My dear Don Ignacio Jouanne!" breathed the lady. She was a tall lady, of movements quick and graceful. She extended a slim white hand, exquisitely cared for. "How fares the pride of your life?" she inquired.

"The Presidential Guards," said Jouanne, "are what they have always been: as splendid troops as any in the world."

"They are what you have made them, Colonel. Every loyal citizen knows how much the Republic owes you. So does the President."

If Jouanne noted what might have been intentional distinction between the loyal citizens and President Ruiz, he offered no correction.

A slight turn of the mantilla hinted that the lady was looking for eavesdroppers: "Let us hope that the Guard need not soon be tested."

"Let us hope so." The Colonel's words had as much fervor as those of most military men expressing a desire for peace. "Otherwise"—his nostrils dilated, his eyes shone—"His Excellency will see what absolute devotion and perfect discipline can accomplish."

There was no doubting his sincerity, and its effect was to produce in his companion an intensity of loyal interest that must have effaced any doubts he had of her. Was he indeed sure of his troops? To the last man? Absolutely? Ah, that was capital! It gave one the sense of security—especially a lonely woman who might not be loved by a misguided populace. She bade him a gracious good night.

She went out by a side-door, where her motor-car was waiting.

"Home," she distinctly directed the Indian chauffeur.

The car swung toward the Plaza, but turned abruptly into a quiet street. The lady whispered a fresh order through the speaking-tube, and progress was diverted until half the city had been traversed. Then came a command to stop.

Wrapping her mantilla still more carefully about her head and face, the lady looked from the window. The poorly lighted street was deserted. She stepped out.

"Wait here," she said.

She threaded two by-streets, doubled, and then pressed a hidden button in a long, high wall. A gate opened.

"Tell Don Cipriano that I would see him on a matter of state."

She was left waiting in the garden for scarcely five minutes. Then she was taken to a handsomely furnished study in the house, where the puffy Chief of Secret Service expressed his delighted surprise at her call.

The lady cut him short: "There is too much light."

From an electric switch he partially darkened the room.

"The doors," said the lady.

Don Cipriano opened one and then the other: nobody there.

"And now?" he asked.

"The stability of the present government is entirely in your hands, Don Cipriano."

He extended those plump members. "There are the police."

Everybody's Magazine, November, 1923

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"Poof!"

"And the army."

"Poof!"

"I'm sorry you think so much depends on me."

"*Are* you?"

"It is a great responsibility."

She spoke slowly: "And a great—opportunity. Suppose you were tempted?"

"Impossible!"

"By ambition."

"Not at all."

"By—romance."

Don Cipriano bent forward: "I don't understand."

She laughed her low, musical laughter. "For the Chief of a Bureau of Intelligence, you are singularly unintelligent. In a word, the office of His Excellency—even his life—is between your fingers. If you wished, you need open your fingers only so little——"

"You don't mean that the President mistrusts me!"

"Do *you* dare to tell me you are loyal to him?"

"As loyal as I have often tried to tell you I want to be to you! My life is pledged to him—more: my honor."

The lady laughed again. "The President," she said, "has just done me the distinction of asking me to marry him."

Don Cipriano's fat body heaved. A loud gasp hissed through his drooping mustache. "He—he——"

"Exactly."

"The people; they won't——"

"Do not hesitate: you would say they won't allow it. But they will—if I undertake to make them. There is no hurry! I can wait a year. Colonel Jouanne's troops are a mere handful, but they are something to begin with."

Don Cipriano tried to read her face, but the room was too dark. "That would mean revolution."

"So will the verification of Señor Trujillo's perfectly patent suspicions. You know well that the Minister of Finance is looking for certain irregularities on the part of the President. Revolution! Is this the first time that you, on your own part, have ever thought of revolution?"

"The President would run away; he'd not fight."

"He would not run without me—and *I* would not run away."

"You?" The man seized her hands. "You know I love you! And now this damned cur has asked you to marry him! What was your answer?"

"I haven't given any—yet. It depends on what you are now going to tell me: the truth about *your* plans for the future of Catamarca. . . ."

PERSONS connected with the high art of the moving picture are not accustomed to early hours. Buster Kent was readily enough admitted to a tiny Bronx apartment. It was furnished with some scanty remnants salvaged from the days of Mangus Cheavey's respectability, and many pathetically cheap and gaudy items to be classed only as makeshifts.

"I haven't the least idea how to do the sort of thing I want to do," began Buster, blushing to the roots of his blond hair and looking uncommonly handsome about it, "and so I might as well begin by telling you what you'll be clever enough to find out anyhow."

There was a certain shrewdness in his crimson-kimonoed hostess, but of the beauty that had once been her greatest asset only a pathetic trace remained. Her cheeks were flabby; the attempts to conceal the crow's-feet and the wrinkles about her drooping mouth had failed. A row of faint lines ran upward, along her upper lip; her hair was very scanty and very yellow. She made a measured gesture of welcome.

"Are you from the Red Star Studios?"

"Lord, no—I've nothing to do with the movies!"

Her eyes, their pupils permanently dilated by long exposure to the spot-lights, betrayed real disappointment; her other features, being under better command, registered the screen's conventional equivalent of polite inquiry.

"Then to what do I owe this visit?"

She spoke the jargon of her trade. Her lips moved as if to the clicking of a camera.

"I want you to help me find your husband."

Mazie Cheavey—Minnie Milson of the movies—had been used to that, too. Her reaction to his bold request was precisely that raising of the eyebrows which a picture director would have demanded.

"A detective?"

It gave Buster the cue he wanted: "I'm

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not after the rewards—if you fix it so's I can find him, they're yours."

Instantly all artificiality dropped from her. Her body shook with vindictiveness, her voice with greed.

"If you're telling the truth, that's the first sensible word I've heard about this business. Detectives and gum-shoe men and more detectives, all asking a wife to blow on her husband—and *they* to pocket every cent there was in it!"

Buster had come prepared to expatiate upon her husband's base ill-treatment of her; it was amazingly unnecessary: during five years, the facts had spoken only too plainly. Just because she was bitter against Cheavey's failure to share the fruits of his dishonesty, she would not betray him unrewarded. Buster's predecessors had accepted as genuine the pose of the neglected yet loyal wife, into which she had naturally fallen from long training in hack-scenarios. Nobody had thought of the simple truth, and she, overtricked by her own cunning, had assumed that the detectives were as mercenary as she.

"This will show you who I am," said Buster.

There were a few personal papers in the pockets of his dinner-jacket. She looked at them.

"Then draw up a contract," she said.

"A contract?"

"Sure. You're hiring me, aren't you?"

He'd had two years in law-school. He wrote rapidly and signed a memorandum, promising her the rewards if she gave him information leading to Cheavey's arrest.

"Now we got to have a witness."

"But nobody must know!"

"Just to your signature. I'll get the janitor."

She did. When the sleepy man had gone, she turned again to Buster: "My husband's in Catamarca!"

Buster had heard of the turbulent little republic, but he had never been within a thousand miles of it. For the first time in his brief business experience, he was glad that, in college, he had specialized in Spanish.

"He's communicated with you?"

"Never a line—the stingy thing!"

"Then how do you know?"

"I know he started for there."

"Did he tell you he was going to Catamarca?"

"Do you think if I'd known he was going anywhere, I'd 'a' let him leave me high and dry?" She moved to a little bookcase. One shelf was lined with a row of red guide-books. "For a good year before he made his get-away, he was studying these." Her voice grew still harder. "Said he was going to retire—going to take me on a trip—and I was dumb enough to fall for it!"

Buster hurried to her side, but the gilt titles of the guide-books covered all the world.

"How do you know he picked Catamarca?"

"There's only one that's been marked." She drew out the volume. "This one."

The book opened at the small section devoted to the suspected country. A glance at all the other pages showed them virgin, but these had been heavily marked and then treated to a severe interview with an eraser.

"It was the one thing he forgot," said Mazie. "It must 'a' dropped out of one of his suit-cases. I found it under the bed next morning."

Buster scarcely heard; he was looking at the margin of the page opposite that on which the account of Catamarca began: there, made by the left hand which had held the book while the right wielded the eraser, was the imprint of an ink-stained thumb.

"I'll take this with me," he said.

NEXT morning, at Stanwood Atwater's office, he secured all the data in that gentleman's possession, but he did not mention one word of his interview with Mazie.

"Still think you'll make me an insurer?" mocked Atwater.

"Certain," said Buster, with a good deal more assurance than he really felt.

"You've taken on a pretty big proposition. If I thought you had a chance in the world of making me change the business practises of a lifetime, do you suppose I'd ever have taken your bet?"

"If I thought I hadn't several chances, do you suppose I'd ever have offered it, Mr. Atwater?"

The banker studied him with a new attention. "Look here, this is a serious matter: what do you know?"

"I know you've made a bet with me."

"Oh, I'll stick to my agreement! But you're too young to let run loose with any

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really valuable information. What do you propose to do?"

"To find Mangus Cheavey, of course. Good morning, Mr. Atwater."

The door had barely closed on Buster before the president of the Travelers' and Tailors' was in telephonic communication with one of the agencies that had been hunting Mangus Cheavey—or been paid to do so—for five long years.

". . . Yes, J. L. Kent's son. . . . Seems to know something, and so young he's sure to spoil it. . . . Personal reasons, too: there's a sporting proposition involved. . . . I don't give a damn *what* it costs! . . . Sure, wherever he goes—and get there first! . . ."

IT WAS a dull voyage for Buster. There was the usual run of uninteresting passengers: only one that he cared to talk to and another who insisted on talking to him. The former was a tiny, bald-headed man, with a white beard streaked with yellow, and birdlike eyes that peered up at Buster through thick spectacles. Cyrus G. McReynolds, his readily produced card called him. Buster planned to keep the card:

CYRUS G. McREYNOLDS
R. P. D., DR. PHILOL., M. AR.
WUFFORD UNIVERSITY
WAMEGO POTTAWATOMIE CO. KANSAS

"Doctor of Political Science," he explained, "Doctor of Philology and Master of Architecture."

He had two subjects of conversation: the ruins and language of the aborigines of Catamarca, which he was going south to study, and the superiority of Pottawatomie County to all the rest of the world.

Buster was willing to take doses of the second subject in order to learn something about the first. His difficulty was the continuous interruption of Thomas N. Bridgeman. Mr. Bridgeman, as he took pains to explain to everybody, was a native of Cundy's Harbor, Maine, and an oil-operator in Oklahoma, bound for Catamarca in quest of petroleum concessions. He talked a great deal about himself, yet found time to ask Buster a good many questions.

"My theory," Dr. McReynolds would be saying in a quiet corner of the smoking-room, after Buster had successfully led him through miles of Pottawatomie County, "my theory of the ancient civilization of Catamarca——"

Just then, Mr. Bridgeman would move over from his table, bearing his own high-ball with him and bringing no invitation to treat.

"Kent?" he would begin, as if repeating a sound Buster had just emitted. "No relative, now, of J. L. of the Independence Surety?"

Mr. Bridgeman was a large person with a large manner. He had sandy curls on his forehead and bristling sandy hair on his upper lip. He wore a brown coat edged with braid, because he was an oil-magnate; and white trousers, because he had been born at the seashore. His note was loud good-fellowship.

Buster admitted he was his father's son.

"Why, I know *him*!" said Mr. Bridgeman. "All our people are bonded by the Keystone Indemnity; but your concern's a pacemaker. Going to establish a branch in Catamarca?"

Buster was not on his way to the little republic without a reasonable excuse, quite apart from his real purpose: he prided himself on a new idea in insurance. He said that he intended to survey the field.

"Better lay off it!" laughed Bridgeman. "I understand there ain't a good risk in the whole country. How long you going to stop there?"

Dr. McReynolds had faded away. "It all depends," said Buster.

"Well, maybe I can be of some use to you. Never been there before, but I've got some letters to the President. One from his New York banker, who's mine, too: Atwater—Travelers' and Tailors' Trust—know him?"

"Why, yes!" said Buster. "In fact, it was—I mean, I had dinner with him only a few days before I sailed."

"Fine man—solid concern," boomed Bridgeman. "Understand they've never had but one defalcation: feller named Cheavey. Queer story. Ever hear it?"

"I've heard rumors."

Bridgeman told it. "And it's mighty

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funny," he concluded, "that they've never been able to locate the man. Now, your company must have had a lot of experience with that sort of thing. Where'd *you* suppose he'd go?"

"Give it up," said Buster. "Catamarca, as like as not. I think I heard the professor calling me."

"Catamarca? That's a good one! The place is too little to hide in—except the jungle: they say it's thicker'n friendship. But any sensible man'd rather be in jail than there."

It was all very dull indeed until they were about to leave Port of Spain. . . .

THE setting sun threw a rosy glow over the clustering housetops; the sky shaded from pink to crimson, moment by moment, and the waters limpidly darkened. Then, preceded by three black porters, staggering under unbelievable heaps of baggage, a woman came aboard.

She might have been any age from twenty-five to thirty-six. She had the grace of a child, the figure of a houri, the air of an empress. Her feet were incredibly small; her hands, fluttering infinite gestures of command to the porters, seemed possessed of separate individualities, each subservient to the regal head with its piled masses of blue-black hair. Her features were as delicately wrought as those of a statue, the nose sensitive, the red lips parting in a bewildering smile, and on the cheeks a faint flush spread over a smoothness colored like the keys of a harpsichord. But it was her eyes that invited attention: under curling lashes, they shone like woodland pools, brownly clear, yet absolutely unrevealing.

"Who is she?"

The question ran through the boat. The Captain was new to this route: he didn't know. The purser said only that the name given him was that of the Señorita Savedra y Loreto and that she was booked for Catamarca.

Buster's glance, on her arrival, wandered —he could never tell why—to a deck-hand, a swarthy, sinister man, who had been moving about busily enough a moment earlier. This man had come to a sudden standstill. His gaze, like that of most of those around him, was all for the new passenger—but it was unmistakably a gaze of hate.

Mr. Bridgeman, of course, was the first to talk to the Señorita Savedra y Loreto. No passenger-steamer ever sailed without an acquaintance-maker: to this rôle the red-curled oilman had appointed himself when the *Almirante Villar* passed the Goddess of Liberty, and he now courageously pursued it in the face of all the hauteur of the newcomer from Port of Spain.

He heeded no rebuff; he couldn't distinguish cold from warmth. The only way in which the señorita could have escaped him was to cloister herself in her cabin—and she liked fresh air.

"See that fellow with the two-colored beard, Miss Loreto? The one that looks like a cross between a nanny-goat and a hoot-owl?" He indicated Dr. McReynolds. "Well, you ought to meet him: one of the biggest professors we've got in America, and he's going to your country to study the Indians. Your country *is* Catamarca, isn't it?"

She did not answer; though her eyes granted one glance to the doctor, one glance was enough. Bridgeman, however, was not in the least disconcerted.

"Then that young athlete that's just come up to him. Say, there's a typical American of our best sort!"

Her gaze, taking in Buster, betrayed a hint of interest.

"That's J. L. Kent's son—son of the Independence Surety Corporation's president—worth half a million in his own right and certain to come in for all his father's ten million. And do you know what he's doing? Learning the bonding business from the bottom up."

Buster's was a handsome figure. Perhaps for that reason, the señorita now gave him a second glance.

"And what," she inquired, in a deliciously drawling and charmingly accented English, "is a bonding business?"

Bridgeman was delighted to explain. The señorita smiled into his reddish eyes: her smile was ravishing.

"How funny for him to come so far!"

Bridgeman had a theory about Buster's voyage, and he hinted it. During the next day or two, he more than hinted it. The fact soon developed that Mr. Bridgeman was overplaying his rôle of acquaintance-maker. An impressionable heart beat

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beneath his braided coat: the oil-operator was falling in love. He did not introduce Buster.

Nothing happened—until the incredible event occurred. The *Almirante Villar's* chief officers were on the bridge, taking the sun. The deck-stewards were below, preparing to reappear as dining-room stewards at the last luncheon. Nearly all the passengers had sought the smoking-room for a cocktail; Buster was conscientiously doing a two-mile walk and formulating his revolutionary ideas about insurance. The señorita stepped from her cabin amidships—a swarthy form leaped from behind a ventilator-shaft and laid hold of her: he was the sinister person whom Buster had seen ominously scrutinizing her at the moment of her arrival—and his free arm ended in a gleam of steel.

Buster covered the space between them in three leaps. A jerk of his left hand wrenched the woman free. His right hand gripped the wrist on the tension of which possession of the knife depended. Crooked fingers tore his silk shirt and the running shirt beneath it from neck to waist-line; yellow fangs sank into a bared shoulder.

The woman screamed. The deck filled with people.

But the brief fight was over. A stunning half-hook to the jaw had made a passive captive, and Buster, his shirt flapping about his waist, was bowing to the señorita as gravely as if he were dressed for a reception.

"I hope you weren't scared," he said in his best Castilian.

The eyes that resembled woodland pools were shot through with tropical sunlight.

"Señor, I was too much engaged in watching. Never have I seen a back with such magnificent muscles!"

She was smiling openly. Was she laughing secretly? Suddenly aware of his condition, Buster gathered the tattered folds of his shirt about him and started through the crowd of passengers among whom only the flushed Bridgeman was not congratulatory. But her cool hand on his bare arm stayed him.

"Señor Buster Kent," she said, "do not misunderstand. I owe you my life. I shall repay——"

A shout from the crow's-nest interrupted her.

"Land ho!" it cried. "On the starboard bow!"

Out of the sapphire sea there had risen, at the horizon's edge, the pearly mountains of Catamarca. . . .

"RIO DE ADRAR?" repeated the President. He looked keenly, across his desk, at the slim, beak-nosed official confronting him. "Still, I suppose, anthropological researches?"

The Minister of Finance assented. He was a clean-shaven man, with high cheek-bones and a hard eye. "This work, so important to the history of our country——"

"Is safe in your competent hands," Don Ricardo assured him. "For me, the dull, but pressing, matters of daily routine. How long do you expect to be gone?"

"One week—ten days: who knows?"

"Well, the Republic owes you a vacation."

Not five minutes later, the President was closeted, in the same room, with another caller.

"My honored sir"—Don Ricardo stroked his pointed beard; then tapped Buster's letter of introduction—"of course I know him well—Mr. Quimby. He is the head of the great New York banking-institution condescending to handle that very little account which I manage to maintain in the United States."

What Buster started to reply was: "You mean *one* of your little accounts, don't you?" Quimby had told him that Atwater's bank had another. However, the words did not escape him. As he glanced about the huge, ornate apartment, he remarked only: "Yes, so Mr. Quimby told my father."

Don Ricardo elevated his heavy brows. "What did he tell the Señor Kent?"

"Oh, just that you kept an account with them."

"Ah," said His Excellency. He rang from his desk for cooling drinks and offered Buster the freedom of Catamarca. "We are gay, if diminutive. Whatever you desire, it is yours."

Buster leaned back in his comfortable chair, and regarded the affable figure of his host, who sat with piles of papers neatly before him and a telephone at his elbow.

"Thanks," said he, "but I'm here on business."

"You were not thinking of extending the

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activities of your corporation to Catamarca?"

"Well, yes—I was rather."

"Alas, dear sir"—Don Ricardo wagged his regretful head—"we bond no one here: we trust to honor."

"Don't you find it expensive?"

"Everyone must pay for his luxuries: about that you should talk to the excellent chief of our Intelligence Department, Señor Cipriano Barboza."

"Thanks, again. Will you give me a card to him?"

It was provided immediately. Across the large piece of pasteboard was written:

"*Anything* that my friend Señor Kent may wish."

"Now, another thing, Mr. President, if you don't mind: it struck me on the trip down, I might interest *you*. Personally, I mean."

"Surely," smiled Don Ricardo, "you would not bond a President?"

"Oh, no! That might be a good line, but it would interest the people of a country, not their Chief Executive. Here's my idea: We've been branching out into all sorts of insurance, and it struck me all of a sudden: why not insure Central and South American presidents against revolutions?" Buster shone with honest pride. "Brand-new idea, isn't it?"

His Excellency seemed mildly amused—surprised, but interested, too. "Just between us, Señor Kent—is it what you would call a good risk? Your ship brought down for me an airplane in which I intend to learn to fly and then, if it goes, I may persuade our Minister of War to order some for our army: you might do better to insure me against a fall from that airplane."

"We'll do that, too. But you're not looking for any domestic trouble, are you?"

Did His Excellency flush? "I am a bachelor."

"I don't mean that," Buster hurried to explain. "Domestic, not foreign, you know: a revolution."

"Ah," the President as quickly replied, "certainly not, but I should like very well some such clever insurance, if a reasonable rate——"

"We'd manage to fix that to suit both parties."

"But, Señor Kent, I am nothing if not honest: it is only fair to remind you that the Catamarcans are a temperamental folk."

"How long is it since the last one?"

"The last revolution? Oh, a long time: five years."

"Successful?"

The President bowed. "I led it."

"That might just possibly affect the rate."

"If one can seize a government, one should be able to hold it."

"Not necessarily. I'll bet your predecessor did—and wasn't."

"There is now," said His Excellency, "no other Ricardo Ayalo Ruiz in Catamarca."

"Still, it's a rich soil, isn't it? Things grow overnight—even presidents."

Their positions, though Buster did not seem to notice it, had been reversed: His Excellency was now more eager to buy than Buster to sell. Ricardo talked of a $500,000 policy, Buster of a $100,000. The semi-annual premium? There again there was an amicable difference of opinion, Buster pulling out series of rate-sheets and consulting them with much figuring.

"You see," said Buster, "the way I figure it, this proposition ought to be just the other way 'round from regular life-insurance. There, the longer you're on earth, the higher your premium; here, the longer you've been in office, the less you give up: the more, the steeper; but the less, the higher. Get me?"

"But in any event," smiled Don Ricardo, "you must lay the matter before the Señor Kent senior."

Buster brought his chair-legs to the floor and struck the presidential desk with an open palm.

"Your Excellency," he said, "I'll tell you what I'm prepared to do, and it's my last word. I'll take you on personally. I'll go as high as $150,000 and as low as your own rate, and if my father's company doesn't O. K. the deal by 6 P.M. today, I'll underwrite you myself: *provided*"—he bent across the desk; their eyes met again—"provided you tell me the whereabouts of Mangus Cheavey."

The bell of the President's telephone gave forth a silver tinkle. . . .

DON CIPRIANO grumblingly took the bit of paper that, when handed to his employe, had been wrapped around a substantial coin, and read:

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"From the Pinkerburns Detective Agency New York. After American boy just landed from the *Almirante Villar*. Five minutes only. Will share reward."

"Show him up," said Don Cipriano.

A moment later, in the light that poured over his shoulders upon the visitor, he was appraising the robust figure of Mr. Thomas N. Bridgeman.

The oil-operator from Oklahoma placed a square-topped brown derby on a chair and advanced with extended hand.

"Glad to know you, Chief," said he. "Speak English?"

"I do," the Señor Barboza assured him, in that language. "But I am very busy."

"Don't say a word, Chief. I know how it is. Here's my credentials."

Don Cipriano scrutinized them. "And now?"

"Well, it's like this, Chief: our people have been after a fellow named Cheavey for five years, and we've just got a tip he's in your country."

"That is not a Catamarcan name. Is he perhaps Brazilian?"

"No, straight American. Embezzler. Travelers' and Tailors' Trust."

"And he arrived today on the *Almirante Villar?*"

"You got me wrong. He's been here some time, but we just got that tip——"

"What was your—your 'tip'?"

Mr. Bridgeman grinned and looked wise: "Aw now, Chief: is that fair—between members of our profession?"

On a convenient ash-tray, Don Cipriano tapped the stump of his cigar. "Then what do you want?"

"This," said Bridgeman, "and you can count yourself in for twenty-five per cent of the reward if we pull it off. A young fellow named Kent has got some inside information, same as we have, and he's come down here to bag this guy Cheavey." He told all he knew about Buster, and a bit more. "Unless I'm careful, the kid'll gum the cards for me."

"Or," suggested Señor Barboza, "secure an arrest before *you* do?"

"Oh, well, it might be that, too—by dumb luck. Anyway, I've got to side-track him."

Don Cipriano was fat, he was gray; but he had apparently been a man of the world in his time. "There is no other reason?"

"Hell, yes!" laughed Bridgeman uneasily: he had himself played his host's game too often not to know when it was best to be frank with a cross-examiner. "That young fool's butted into me in all sorts of ways. There was a skirt on the boat——"

"A skirt?"

"Yes, a lady-skirt: one of your Catamarcans, and I'll tell the world, when it comes to frou-frou, you people——"

"I see. And you want this young man removed?"

"Just for a day or two. Nothing serious. Something irregular with his passport, perhaps. *You* know: I can see I can't tell *you* anything!"

He chuckled. Don Cipriano chuckled.

"Just till I can take a little quiet look-around for Mangus Cheavey," concluded Bridgeman.

"And for the lady," murmured the Señor Barboza.

"You said a mouthful, Chief!"

There was a brief pause.

"And there's that reward," said Mr. Bridgeman.

"I think that you mentioned thirty-five per cent?"

"Twenty-five. But—oh, well, we'll call it thirty."

They became excellent friends. They talked long and pleasantly. When the detective left, Señor Barboza followed the same course that Stanwood Atwater had followed in somewhat similar circumstances. He took up his private telephone:

"Get me the Presidential Palace," he said. "I want to talk to His Excellency himself." . . .

"A THOUSAND pardons," said the President to Buster.

Buster bowed.

The President put the receiver to an ear.

"Yes?—You know my voice, I yours—I understand—I know that already—Here—Now—*Perfectamente*—A little later—Ah, my friend, how often have I said the Republic can never adequately reward you!"

He hung up the receiver.

"It is regrettable that affairs of state must interfere with life's amenities, Mr. Kent. What makes you to suppose that I can find your Mr. Cheavey?"

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"This is a small country, and you're a big man."

"Hum—come up to the roof."

"As high as you like: the sky's my limit in this game."

Don Ricardo led the way to the top of the Presidential Palace—a large, flat square, whence one looked from the jungle's edge and the bases of the white-capped mountains to the blue harbor with its dancing ships, the white presidential yacht among them. At the center of the roof was a pile of thin boarding and a heap of wires, over which two soldiers were working.

"The airplane!" explained His Excellency.

With the pride of a show-dog in a new collar, he asked questions of the soldiers. Then, quickly, he dismissed them and turned to his guest with a slightly weary smile: "The most difficult luxury for a public man is privacy, Mr. Kent. Are you quite sincere in your offer?"

"If," said Buster, "you will put me on the sure trail, you can have a notary draw those underwriting-papers—you can take whatever steps the Catamarcan law requires—and I'll sign up before I leave this house. If you want any guarantee, all you've got to do is take me to the United States consul."

The President smiled again. "Quite unnecessary. My agents made a satisfactory report concerning you before you had been an hour ashore."

"Well, then you know I'll keep my word. All *I* must be sure of is that your Mangus Cheavey is mine."

"You will be sure when you learn his importance in this country. Your friend, Mr. Cheavey——"

"Not my friend! He——"

"I know! Pray attend. Statecraft, Mr. Kent, necessitates the employment of strange tools, and we statesmen are compelled, for our countries' welfare, to use the ax nearest to hand. Five years ago, a stranger came to Catamarca." His Excellency's voice was very sad. "He possessed no passport, but the times were unsettled. He spoke Spanish; we accepted his word that he was Peruvian: the common people have not yet learned that this is false. Those were terrible days, when an unscrupulous tyrant had our dear republic beneath his iron heel and was stripping her, for his own aggrandizement, of—of the very shirt upon her back. I, with a few other patriots—we burned to give our lives for the salvation of Catamarca, for the rescue of her civil liberties. But such things are not to be bought by lives alone: the seizure of a government is expensive. This stranger had much money, and he joined our cause."

"He financed the rebellion?"

"He financed the glorious Revolution. We were thankful. We gave him exalted office. Nor should we cavil today, had he been true: alas, he has betrayed the gratitude of a beneficent country!"

"He's gone in for graft?"

"You shall hear the unbelievable!"

"Why haven't you impeached him, or something?"

"Why do not you, in the great United States, impeach your dishonest politicians? This man," said the President, "by lavishing his ill-gotten gains upon the undeserving poor, has won popularity. You must seize him clandestinely. I shall show you the papers that my Secret Service has discovered: they leave no doubt of his identity. Only, you must have him safe out of the country—I shall find a way—before I dare to publish the evidence that Señor Esteban Trujillo has robbed the Republic."

"Trujillo?" repeated Buster. "What's his job?"

"Señor Esteban Orellano y Trujillo is the Minister of Finance."

EVENING had come before everything was arranged. There was no denying the authenticity of the identification papers—they even included a faded "still" of the deserted Minnie Milson, preserved because of only Heaven and Dr. Freud know what sentimental complex: their rightful owner was beyond question Mangus Cheavey.

It was too late to cable New York regarding the wild-cat insurance project: Buster undertook the underwriting on his own responsibility, and, by oaths, red seals and notaries, it was executed and confirmed—a document imperative in the country of its origin and binding everywhere. As for Señor Trujillo:

"Almost as you entered," said the President, "he left. He has what you call a hobby: our prehistoric monuments. He

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exhumes huge columns from strange corners and presents them to the National Museum; he has compelled us to add a new wing to the building! The Chamber of Deputies votes him whatever he asks. Now he has gone to Rio de Adrar to dig up some more."

"Rio de Adrar? Where's that? I'll start tonight."

"There is no train until tomorrow. Why go? Rio de Adrar is only a stupid village on the edge of the jungle."

"But I'm not going there for jazz."

"Don Esteban will return in a week or ten days: men do not flee from dangers of the existence of which they are ignorant."

"But a whole week! I can't afford the time!"

His Excellency shrugged. "You North Americans!"

"I'll have to start tomorrow at the latest."

That was Buster's last word. He declined the President's dinner-invitation and left the palace.

He considered that it would be as well to have immediately the help of the national Secret Service for his expedition, but he realized that Don Cipriano must, by this time, have deserted his desk for his dinner. When Kent was finally headed in the right direction to Barboza's home-address, night lay over the city.

The Plaza and the streets leading into it were well lighted, but beyond these centers brooded a darkness that the rare lamps rather compressed than dispelled. All save the business thoroughfares of the City of Catamarca are narrow and winding, badly paved and worse drained. Even the patricians of that ancient town house themselves in quarters thus approached, and the Chief of the Secret Service was evidently a patrician.

Buster kept, though with slow progress, in the right way; no yard of the journey invited confidence. Once he thought he saw a dim shape dodging around a corner ahead; again, he could have sworn to the sound of soft footfalls a brief distance back. At last a broken plaque informed him that he was at the end of his quest. Beyond this junction of two narrow passages, the gate to Señor Barboza's residence should be the second to the right.

Buster found it: twenty paces from the corner, an oaken door in a ten-foot wall. He lit a match. An unpolished knocker—a crouching goblin, green from neglect—presented clasped arms for his seizure. The match went out.

There came a rush of feet from around the corner, the whir of charging men.

Kent wheeled. They were upon him: three or four.

He jumped aside. One went by, hurled on by sheer momentum. Buster tripped a second. Another was at his throat, and somebody had leaped upon him from behind.

Buster hurled himself to the wall, bashing this last opponent against the uncompromising stones. His throat was in a vise; the blood pounded in his temples; pale sparks flew before his bulging eyes. But he could see the outline of the garroter's face, and, bringing into play every remaining ounce of strength, he placed both palms under the far-protruding chin and began to compel it upward and backward—backward—backward——

They fought in silence. There was no sound except the slow scraping of feet, the panting of the two assailants and the whistle of Buster's breath as it forced its way through a steadily constricting channel.

The weight on his shoulders lessened. He pushed harder against the wall. The hold of the man on his back slackened. It ceased: the burden slid away——

But the garroter was still there. He was venomously there. His head yielded; but not his fingers: they tightened; they dug and dug——

They tightened.

Buster increased his pressure on the chin—increased it desperately——

But the garroter's fingers tightened all the more.

THE electric lamps had not been lighted in the presidential study, but the President was still there. And he had another visitor.

"So that," inquired Don Ricardo, "was the only untoward incident? Good! To revert, then: the Habana banker gave you some little receipt—eh?" A paper rustled. The President flashed a pocket torch upon it. The light flickered over his white hands; then, again, darkness. "Made out, I see, in your name."

"As you agreed, my Ricardo."

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"And as you suggested, my heart. Ah, well, I congratulate you, and I trust that you are now satisfied of the sincerity of my devotion." The President paused; then: "Of course, there still remains one proof more. But first as to politics: Señor Trujillo is gone to one of his buried temples, and, in his absence, I have arranged a new occupation for him—not that he is to be feared, but that a stranger's precipitancy might spoil your plans and mine." In three strokes of the brush, the President sketched the motive of Buster's visit: "I exhibited to this *Americano* certain documents that you may recall disposing to me a year ago. Then, metaphorically, I pointed straight at the Minister of Finance."

The silvery ripple of her laughter was the lady's best applause, but she added:

"Ah, *Vuecencia*, what a courageous coup!"

"I completed the case," said His Excellency, "by referring to Señor Trujillo's latest defalcation."

"You told him—do you mean you told him that Don Esteban has robbed the national treasury?"

"Well, he has, you know. . . . So," the President continued, "we need now fear only that Don Cipriano may delay too long in striking us. We must not go until he compels me; always we have realized that there were the appearances to be preserved—and now there is to be preserved the even more important insurance. In the end, it may be necessary to let him learn that I suspect him. But he is almost certain to act against me of his own initiative. So far as we are concerned, everything is ready."

"He does not guess that—Don Cipriano?"

"Nobody guesses. Barboza tugs at the leash. The sole question is how soon he can tear it."

"Of course there remains our—our wedding." The lady's tone was modestly lowered. "But perhaps you are right that it should wait the very eve of our departure. . . ."

THE boat had docked at three o'clock. Everyone in Catamarca had known that the Señorita Eulalia Savedra y Loreto was somewhere out of the country. By four o'clock everyone knew she had returned.

Strong personalities are speedily felt. Señorita Eulalia had landed from Spain less than eighteen months before the evening of her balcony conversation with Don Ricardo. She had come as a coloratura soprano; had captured all ears and most hearts—but she had begun by being too popular with the gentlemen to suit any of the ladies, and shortly became too expensive a stage-idol for the worship of any of the gentlemen except the gilded few.

These, however, were the rulers of their country. While the populace hated her for what it deemed her disregard of its well-being in the exercise of her influence in legislative, executive and judicial precincts, while the people of the street referred to her as the Euskara—a derisive reference to her supposedly Basque origin—Eulalia, although conscientiously singing to smaller and smaller audiences, became "La Dorada" among the men in command. Each rivaled his neighbor in bestowing favors upon her. But she preferred to remain the Señorita Savedra y Loreto.

From the palace she went straight, as once before she had done, to Barboza's house. Its grounds ran completely through a block. The lady knocked at a gate opposite to that at which Buster Kent had essayed to apply; Don Cipriano himself opened it.

"I trust you had a pleasant voyage?"

"It was rather tiresome. But it was rest that I went for."

They walked. Don Cipriano persisted:

"No interesting persons in Port of Spain?"

"You know that I went thence to Habana. Habana was dull. There was one entertaining passenger on the return-voyage: a handsome American of the North."

"A young one?"

"I care nothing for unfinished sketches. He said that he was rich—in oil."

"He said so?"

"He at last confided to me that he was a detective."

"Nobody else aboard?"

"If there was, he would not permit me to realize it. He wanted to marry me."

"What insolence!"

"There may be rich detectives in the colossal republic." The lady's voice softened: "There is one rich detective in Catamarca, Don Cipriano."

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"You should not," he said, "confuse a chief of Secret Service with a detective."

"This American detective interested me."

Señor Barboza, in the darkness, frowned heavily. "If I see him again——"

"You have seen him?"

"Yes, and if I see him again——"

"*I* shall."

Don Cipriano found her hand. "Why will you play with me? Am I not planning to risk——"

He was rudely interrupted. They had reached the other side of the grounds. They were, in fact, beside the other gate, and from the farther side of it rose a strange shuffling noise.

"What is that? Open the door!"

"It might be someone who has traced you here."

"If anyone has traced me, I must see who it is." She was fumbling at the latch.

"For God's sake, señorita——"

"Light! Light! Is there no light?"

His frightened fingers found a switch in the wall. A yellow glare flooded the doorway as she opened it.

She opened it, but she closed and bolted it immediately. Two struggling figures, savagely entwined, had pitched into the garden and sprawled on the gravel path. One of them leaped up dragging the other by the collar.

Eulalia, her black gown relieved by a splendid necklace of pearls, was regarding him that rose first, but Don Cipriano had eyes only for the other.

"Mr. Bridgeman!" he spluttered.

The oil-operator's square derby had vanished, his red hair was in sad disorder, and his braided coat was torn.

"Here's that fellow," roared Bridgeman. His passport——"

"Read this card," gasped Buster Kent. "From the President.—Tells you to do anything I say.—Arrest this man——"

"Arrest Mr. Bridgeman?"

"Sure.—Tell you why when I get my breath.—Bridgeman.—Not his real name.—His real name's Mangus Cheavey!"

BUSTER'S captive attempted instant protest.

"Mangus Cheavey! Listen to that, will you, Barboza! This guy attacked me——"

"He's a liar!" panted Buster.

Don Cipriano scarcely glanced at the President's card. He thrust stubby fingers into a waistcoat-pocket and drew out a silver whistle, on which he blew a single blast. Eulalia vanished into the shrubbery.

"Lemme go!" Bridgeman blustered. "Didn't you hear that whistle?" He wriggled impotently. "Tell him to let me go, Barboza!"

Don Cipriano gave them a brief consideration with his heavy, impartial eyes.

"Wait!" said he. Three other men ran up. "There is a lady somewhere in these grounds: my guest. Find her, Diego, and bid her wait in the blue reception-room. You others, take this fellow."

"Now!" exulted Bridgeman.

"I mean the redhead," explained Señor Barboza.

Bridgeman sprang back with an oath. "What's all this stuff——"

They seized him. He fought; but they had him.

"You know who I am! You'll pay for this!"

"And lock him up," concluded Don Cipriano, "in the strongroom." He slipped an arm through one of Buster's and turned on his heel. "If you are not too tired, I should like five minutes' talk."

They passed down a shadowy alley at right angles to that up which they heard the clamoring Bridgeman being dragged. When the last sound of protest had died, Barboza spoke again:

"This fellow says I know who he is. Who is he?"

"His name's Mangus Cheavey."

"Exactly; but that means nothing to me. I acted because of the President's card. Who is Mangus Cheavey?"

As briefly as he could, Buster explained.

"If the fellow is so badly wanted, we must have some record of the case. I'll look into it. This *is* the right man?"

"Sure."

"What do you want me to do?"

"Why, hold him for extradition, of course."

They were walking under bright stars, which it seemed a tall man on a housetop might pluck from the sky. The air was scented with flowers.

"In Catamarca," said Don Cipriano, "we prefer certainty to red tape. If you had this man on an American ship, there would be no necessity for formalities.

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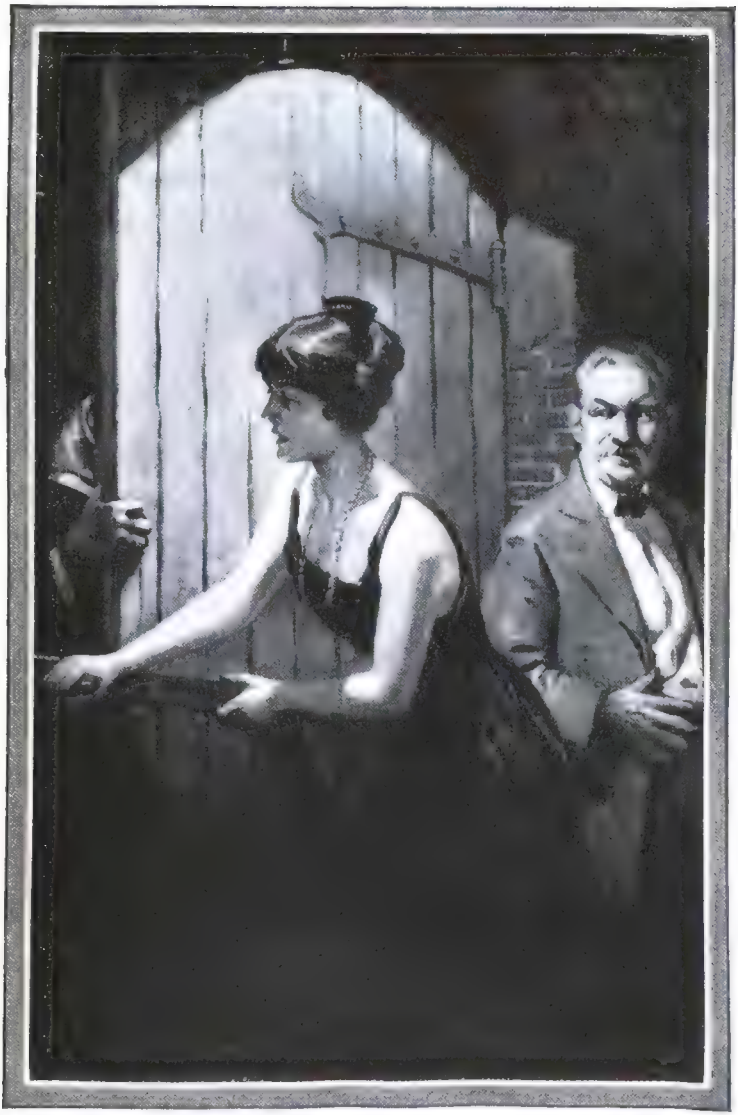

A yellow glare flooded the doorway as she opened it. . . . Two struggling figures, savagely entwined, pitched into the garden.

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The *Senator Reed* is an American passenger-steamer. She is due here, from Benito to New York, tomorrow. I know the captain. Go aboard at four o'clock in the afternoon: you will find your man there, in irons."

"But," began Buster, "that wouldn't be——"

They were arrived at the gate by which the Señorita Eulalia had entered. "Don't thank me: I am simply doing what President Ruiz has asked. You have had a difficult evening; I must not detain you." He opened the door.

"Good—good night," stammered Buster.

The door closed behind him. Making a blind guess at the general direction of his hotel, he started along the dark street. He had not gone ten paces when somebody touched his arm.

"Señor Kent!"

He had no appetite for further fighting, but that velvety feminine whisper reassured him: he knew her voice.

"Señorita Loreto?"

"*Sí, sí.* Señor, are you mad?"

"I don't understand."

"And I must hurry. This Señor Bridgeman: after you so splendidly saved my life on the ship, did I not tell you he was a detective, and that he wanted to secure your Señor Cheavey before you could? How then can you think that Señor Bridgeman is Señor Cheavey?"

Buster chuckled. "I never thought it for a minute!"

"But, Don Buster——"

"Listen, señorita: the real Cheavey is a big man in the government: it's a fellow named Trujillo, the Minister of Finance."

"Trujillo? Bah! You said to Señor Barboza——"

"I meant to ask his help to catch Trujillo, but when that detective and his fellows jumped me, I knew I had to get them out of my way first."

"And you have succeeded? Don Cipriano has arrested Señor Bridgeman?"

"Don Cipriano's done a lot more than I asked. He's done too much: that's the trouble. He's going to put Bridgeman on a ship bound for New York tomorrow, and he expects me to go along. I can't. I've got to stay and find the real Cheavey. But if I'd told your Secret Service chief all that, he'd have turned Bridgeman loose, and Bridgeman's convinced me that he's the sort of rival that's best out of the way."

The woman's fingers tightened on Buster's arm.

"Oh, Don Buster, do you not understand why Señor Barboza has done this? He wants both you and this detective safely out of Catamarca. Find the real Mangus Cheavey? You *have* found him. The real Mangus Cheavey is Señor Cipriano Barboza!"

"CIPRIANO?" gasped Buster. "Why, the President said——"

"The President wants to save Señor Barboza."

"They're friends?"

"Enemies. Don Ricardo counts on Don Cipriano to lead a revolution."

"*What?* I've just insured him against one! Why can't he let me scotch the fellow, now, instead of waiting to kill him off in a revolution?"

"He wants the revolution to succeed."

Buster clapped his bewildered brow: "He wants——"

"*Sí, sí.*—I must go!"

"You mean the President——"

"The President has taken money from the treasury. There must be revolution—to cover his tracks; to make him a political refugee. He will take more money and go."

"He'll take *my* money, too!"

"If you have madly insured him, of course he will collect that—later."

"So he's got Barboza to fake a revolution——"

"No, *no!* They were friends only when Don Cipriano's money put Don Ricardo into power. Now Don Cipriano knows nothing of the President's plans, except that he has stolen. By use of that knowledge, he is quietly fomenting a revolution. He does not know the President knows this, but His Excellency does. Let me go, Don Buster!"

"Excellency! I'll tell the world he's that!"

"You must tell nobody. You must wait until all is ready. On the ship I told you of my influence: I shall make all well for you."

"Wait? If I'm not on the *Senator Reed* tomorrow, Barboza will smell a rat and lock *me* up! Oh, you've got it wrong,

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somehow! What makes you think Cipriano's Cheavey? The President showed me some papers of Trujillo——"

"They were Señor Barboza's."

"How do *you* know that? This man Barboza doesn't *look* like Cheavey."

She shrugged. "An old man—five years—much worry—the climate."

"I have his description and a picture."

"His description as he was five years ago! Look at the picture, put a gray mustache on it."

She carried conviction.

"Now just tell me how you know about those papers. I don't want to keep you here; I'm your friend——"

"Ah, Don Buster"—her voice thrilled as with a quick tenderness—"if only I can make you understand how much I am *yours!* I do not want to tell about these papers, because I do not want you to think me unworthy to be your—your very best of friends!"

He was glad she couldn't see him! "Just tell me."

"It is the only advice possible. Attend: I am Spanish; the people, because they hate me, call me Basque; but I am true Spanish. The President brings me here to be *prima donna.* Oh, only because he loves music, Don Buster: music and money he loves, but no woman. Very good. It is my best luck in all my life. Do I not owe him a return?"

"Of course—of course. Well?"

"Well, this silly Don Cipriano wants me to marry him. Ah, Señor Kent, if you knew how hard was my life because so many want to marry me! But if I marry one, all the others will make life dangerous—I love none of them. I have a dream: I wait for that. I must keep my place, so I do not say 'No'; but I have my dream, so I do not say 'Yes.' I had it; now, perhaps, it is a reality. Don Buster——".

He shook himself. "So you put Barboza off?"

"Yes." She took his cue. "Then one day, to prove that he was rich, he told me who he was. Since then he tells me everything. And he gives me jewels. You cannot here see me, but you saw me in the garden: this necklace of pearls—I dared not refuse—it belonged to the wife of the banker whom he robbed."

"Sarah Atwater's pearls!"

"Atwater was the name. I burn to restore them!"

"But the papers?"

"I secured them—took them to His Excellency—everything but one thing. That I got later and forgot to give. On the ship, in our one talk too brief, you said you had studied about finger-prints, and that you had of this Cheavey——"

"A thumb-print. Yes?"

"Men here are such liars—so deep. I had asked myself: Does this Barboza blacken himself for some purpose I do not guess? I determine to obtain the infallible proof. That was a fortnight since. It might be well to have further evidence: who could tell? If His Excellency should change mind and decide to crush Don Cipriano before a revolution—Señor Barboza shows me in his office how they make and keep finger-prints. He makes print of his own two thumbs and mine and throws it afterwards, in a waste-basket. Left alone one little minute, that I secured."

KENT freed her hand. It went to her breast and returned to press a bit of paper into his outstretched palm.

"And your advice?" asked Buster.

"You must wait. He dare not let Señor Bridgeman go. Señor Bridgeman is as dangerous to Señor Barboza as are you. I shall tell him the President suspects the revolution—that he must cause it immediately or be delivered up for extradition. He needs more ready money: the army demands it if it is to rebel. He has not enough here. All his jewels he has hidden in an old temple in the jungle beyond Rio de Adrar, which everybody knows and none visits: even Señor Trujillo goes to that one no more.

"I shall say to Don Cipriano that he must get the jewels to buy the generals. That will take him days. He will leave a lieutenant to look out for you, and I can attend to the lieutenant. Meantime, there is a Yankee war-ship at Tierra Blanca, two hundred miles the other way; there are marines: you must get them to seize here your Señor Barboza-Cheavey immediately he returns—before he can succeed in his revolt. So you will both have your prisoner and prevent the revolution. But not until I have seen you again, dear friend—at your hotel—tomorrow morning—early!"

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"By Jove, I believe you've hit it!" cried Buster.

"You"—her hand sought his—"you like me, Don Buster?"

"I guess yes!"

"Then come," she laughed. "You help me over this so high wall."

"THEY looked for you everywhere," said Don Cipriano.

His short arms making it just possible for his hands to meet behind him, he was pacing the blue reception-room.

"Everywhere inside these grounds," smiled the lady.

He stopped. "You were outside?"

"I was not where you yourself looked for me: at your strongroom door, whispering sweet words to Señor Bridgeman."

Don Cipriano breathed heavily. "Well, why not? You wanted me to be jealous, didn't you?"

"But of *course* I wanted you to be jealous!" she laughed. "Was that why you locked up the poor fellow?"

"Certainly. I'd promised to help him."

"Only he acted on his own initiative against this Señor Kent?"

"Well—I did lend him a man or two."

"And you locked him up for love of me." She patted her suitor's shoulder. "That is flattering, that. I thought it was because he was after Mangus Cheavey."

"Don't talk so loud!"

"And I thought that when another North American sought this same Cheavey and mistook your Mr. Bridgeman for him, you conceived it a brilliant stroke to surrender the first seeker to the second."

"I did want to gain time: I must be President of Catamarca before I dare face the law. But I'd never have thought of this dodge if I hadn't been jealous. I love you——"

"And you want to marry me! But I will not marry a man in danger such as this: I will not marry you until"—she faced him, exultation in her eyes—"until you *are* the President!"

His usually heavy face was illuminated. "But then?"

"As soon as possible!"

"Eulalia!"

She did not rush to the opened arms. "*Then*—not now. You consider that, when you are President, you can dispose of those who guess your identity—that no one would suspect the Chief Executive to be the New York embezzler—that, even if it were suspected, Americans would not let their great country make war on a little sister republic to avenge a wrong committed only against their Wall Street. But you want to gain time: I am here to warn you that you must act at once."

He was his cautious self again. "What has happened?"

"Something," she poutingly answered, "that you would not give me the chance to tell because you must ask foolish questions about my journey! His Excellency knows."

"About—about the revolution?"

She nodded.

"How?" He breathed hard.

The señorita raised her arched brows. "Who can say?"

"He told you?"

"Was I not at the palace this afternoon—and has he not asked my hand? Attend." She outlined the Ruiz plot, even to the accusation against Trujillo made to Buster.

Don Cipriano chuckled fatly. "But then we could work together, Ruiz and I. He wants what I want."

Her eyes flashed. "He wants *me!*"

The dull red glow of jealousy spread again over Don Cipriano's cheeks. "You wouldn't go?"

She scorned a direct answer: "He counts on that idiot Colonel Jouanne's loyalty: that the Colonel will fight for the President, though the President runs away. *You* might be killed. You must know the presidential yacht is in the harbor, ready to sail. You think it could be seized. Surely! But do even *you* know this: that the parts of the War Office's sample airplane are on the roof of the palace; that they have been assembled; that there is one of the mechanicians, Alvaro Lopez, who is also a pilot?"

"What of it?"

"This: it is less than a hundred miles over the mountains to the boundary-line of Maldonado! No, the President fears only one thing: delay. He is a coward, and he is afraid his thefts may be discovered. Then the people—not the mere officials—would rise; even the worm Jouanne would turn. If it came too unexpectedly, President Ricardo Ruiz might be caught in a trap."

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"All right then: we'll wait."

"Wait?" Her anger rose. "If the people depose one thief, will they elect another?" She saw him wince, but hurried on: "Oh, I know well that, under this constitution, without a Vice-President the Chamber alone elects a President to fill any unexpired term; but would the people let it elect a known thief? Once you have the power, you can hold it. To get the power: that is your problem."

She had swept him with her, but he managed to begin:

"This boy Kent believes that Bridgeman——"

"Suppose," she cut him short, "you lock up that one as you locked up Señor Bridgeman: it would delay discovery only a little. His rich father will be inquiring for him, and there is that North American war-ship at Tierra Blanca. You must lock him up, yes—but tonight, before he can communicate with this war-ship; you must get the jewels from the jungle—buy whatever of the army remains unbought—strike too suddenly to suit even the taste of Don Ricardo Ruiz—and then release your Kent and Bridgeman on condition of their sworn silence for all time!"

Don Cipriano had been retreating from her.

"What is all this about Kent?" he demanded.

"He knows who you are."

Mangus Cheavey turned livid. "He knows that?"

She laughed lightly. "While you looked for me to be consoling Señor Bridgeman through the strongroom door, I was outside in the street, telling Señor Kent."

Cheavey's mouth worked. His eyes changed from amazement to rage. He fumbled in a pocket.

But she was before him, a figure of power.

"Yes, I told! How else could I force you into action? Am I not to marry you? And is it conceivable that I marry a man in danger of arrest for embezzlement? Your one chance—you have said it—is to seize the Presidency. Seize it now—and be safe—and then claim me!"

An hour later, when Don Cipriano believed her to be asleep in her own house, Eulalia was again closeted with His Excellency.

"These Yankees are sudden," she said. "Señor Kent was with Don Cipriano tonight: you thought you could wait, and that he would—until tomorrow! Tomorrow? Everybody knows everything: Señor Kent knows who is Cheavey, and Señor Barboza has by now seized him. Señor Barboza-Cheavey knows that you know his plot, but does not guess that you dread delay, and so he goes to the jungle for his jewels to hurry the plot's execution. These two know these things because I told them. I learned their intentions, I suggested their actions, because they both are in love with me—both, though this handsome Don Buster is not yet aware of his devotion. Keep up steam in the yacht; do not let Lopez leave the palace. Don Cipriano will strike on the moment of his return: have all your remaining plunder ready for that moment's confusion—for your escape." She laughed contentedly. "You wanted no delay of the revolution. I have precipitated the event for you. Good night, Ricardo!"

DEEP in the forest, thirty miles north of Rio de Adrar, two men slept through a brief night beside the black river. They slept in hammocks to avoid the giant ants, and they were cunningly covered with fine nettings to escape the dwarf mosquitoes. Close overhead, the branches intertwined so thickly that scarce a hint of sky might trickle through; the sun must be long risen before the jungle's morning came; but all about the sleepers were those who knew, by surer signs, the dawn's arrival: as if at the rising of a conductor's baton, the invisible orchestra of monkeys, which had fallen silent so short a time before, burst into unbelievable noise.

"There goes the top-sergeant's whistle!" yawned Buster, and he threw a boot at the other hammock.

Two things had thus far saved him: his passion for action and his lack of it for Eulalia. Once he had painstakingly verified the thumb-print by comparison with that in the guide-book, he began to contemplate with horror the prospect of delay the señorita had advised. He could not sit still and do nothing while Mangus Cheavey secured the jewels. Cipriano had been almost too easy: suppose he suspected—suppose he went right on through

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the jungle and into the neighboring country?

And Kent was asked to dally with this mysterious woman! She was coming to call in the morning! What was that sentimental nonsense about being the best of his good friends? You couldn't count on these foreign ladies. He simply ran away. He woke the hotel's dozing night-clerk with preposterous inquiries; half an hour later he roused a cursing liveryman and rode for Rio de Adrar. There the folk may have thought him mad, but they were too polite to say so.

He paused at a barn that called itself an inn, hired Hipólito Chaco, a shifty half-breed guide, bought a canoe and the clothes off its owner's back and thus embarked on the sluggish, sullen river from which the outpost took its name.

A group of dark men in huge hats watched him start: they murmured uninterested prophecies about swamp-fever and previous adventurers; they smoked cigarettes and spat. A barefoot woman, gowned in red and yellow, stood beside them, also smoking and spitting. They diminished; the last mud-house was passed; the forest closed upon the river: Buster and Hipólito were alone on their way.

Each *piragüero* worked at a paddle; but the Indian, as Buster found after sundry attempts at light conversation, preferred to work in silence. An alligator floated by; long-legged, violently colored birds waded beside the mossy banks or flashed across the bows. The water resisted every paddle-stroke; the heat grew heavier. It grew intolerable, and at noonday they landed, lunched on Hipólito's preparation of jerked beef and black beans—and slept.

Kent wanted no avoidable delay: once started for the temple, he would spare no effort toward reaching it before Cipriano, whose later advance might be expedited by the knowledge of a short-cut. Buster had no idea where he was to look for the jewels once he attained his destination; but find them he would, if he had to uproot every stone of the ruin; then he would pick up this Cheavey-Barboza on the way back. Consequently, and despite the half-breed's protests, the siesta was of unheard-of brevity: they were afloat again by mid-afternoon.

The walls of green, in which the thickets ended on either hand, were now noiseless. Buster felt as if nothing lived there—as if nothing could live—and yet as if the jungle itself had a sort of malignant existence, a slow, evil consciousness, biding its certain chance to envelop and asphyxiate them in a gaseous embrace.

Nevertheless, the wilderness has, as truly as the city, its daily schedule. At last, on the half-light of the river, night descended with startling suddenness. Enormous fire-beetles lit their thousand lamps, and immediately forest and river leaped into a deafening cacophony. Until the invisible moon rose the tumult continued; then it ended as abruptly as it had begun. Buster and his Indian worked on in another quiet, made shore again, supped and again slept.

And now it was morning. Kent's boot struck the half-breed into being. He leaped to the ground and soon had coffee ready and the farina mixed with boiled water. Buster finished his share and picked up a paddle.

"No," said Hipólito. "Not any more." He pointed to the jungle. "That way."

"Long?" asked Buster.

The Indian held up two fingers.

"TWO days' journey—for you! Then we'll get there by this afternoon!"

Hipólito made no comment, but headed directly into the forest. A moment more, and it had closed around them, stifling, stubborn, poisonous.

They cut their way with *machetes;* they tore it with their hands. Now they were knee-deep in mud, again their feet sank into virgin moss. Little insects buzzed and stung; small snakes slid, hissing, away from them; once the sneering head of a great serpent swung frightfully from a tree-limb within a yard of Buster's head.

The tortuous progress kept up for many hours, slow beyond realization. Again and again the Indian protested: Buster was heartless. Hipólito threatened to leave his charge to proceed at his own risk; Kent drew his gun and motioned forward.

The heat grilled them; the air was loathsome with decay; the awful silence returned to press upon their skulls until their ears ached. Only the sound of their own progress, infinitely slow, disturbed the quiet and, once in a while, the crash of an unseen tree, dragged down after years of stubborn struggle with preying vines.

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Buster, from a hillock, looked down upon a partial clearing—a basin of open land—from which rose a few columns of weed-topped stone, and over the face of which lay a mass of scattered masonry. It was the temple, the ruin of an ancient civilization's dead religion; but not time alone had ravaged it.

A jaguar coughed in the forest. Overhead, in the intense blue, a flapping vulture circled. Otherwise the spot was deserted; but the clumps of freshly turned earth told the searchers that it had not been so for long. Somebody had been there—perhaps only that morning! . . .

"NO," PROTESTED the almost prostrate proprietor of what had been Buster's hotel in Catamarca City: "God forbid that I should lie to the illustrious señorita! The night-clerk knows only that Señor Kent sought a horse in the dead of night, and that he has not returned."

It may be that the Doña Eulalia was the more incredulous because she had urged Cipriano to arrest Kent during the night. She had stopped at the hotel to ask for Buster, not so much to keep her promise to him as because of a vague premonition. Moreover, again, she failed to relish the insensibility to her charms implicit in what the landlord had told her. The liveryman, called to wait upon her, added nothing to what she had learned at the hotel.

Where had the señor proposed to go? But nowhere! No mention of a destination had been made, and what was he, the liveryman, that he should pry on a gentleman?

Convinced at last that these professions were more than lies from persons sharing the general desire to thwart her, the lady called hurriedly at Don Cipriano's.

"Why didn't you lock the boy up when I told you to?"

Mangus Cheavey tugged at his gray mustache. He was greatly worried. He had made no arrest immediately because he feared publicity and hoped to kidnap Buster when the chances of observation were negligible.

"Negligible? In the daylight?" cried the lady.

He had meant to summon Kent to his presence and then to secure him: Buster was more likely to come by day.

The señorita laughed mockingly. There were recriminations: Don Cipriano decided to advance by some hours his journey to Rio de Adrar; Buster, he decided, had started in the opposite direction, toward Tierra Blanca and his country's war-ship: whatever was to be done in the way of seizing the presidency must be accomplished before that vessel could reach Catamarca.

"You will first get that other Yankee out of harm's way?" Eulalia demanded.

"Bridgeman? *That's* all attended to, anyhow. He's safe aboard the *Senator Reed*, and she sails on time, Kent or no Kent." Cheavey drew his visitor to a window overlooking the garden. His voice trembled. "If I should be too late!"

Fear was in his dull eyes. It was not a sort to excite sympathy, but Eulalia showed some signs of relenting:

"I shall not be idle. You must have the generals, and to get the generals you must have the jewels. But remember that the Chamber is in session. I have still some influence there. Perhaps, too, I can find a way to get money and to reach these generals."

"Eulalia!"

"Not certainly. Let no false hope lessen your efforts or relax your speed; but be sure I shall be busy."

He knew her too well to ask many questions. "God be with you, my dear!" He kissed her hand, breathing excitedly. "It'll all be settled soon now, one way or the other."

"There is but one way," she again reassured him. "God be with you, my dear!"

She, too, was convinced that Buster's departure had for its object the fetching of the war-ship, but, to assure herself of matters in this connection, she opened—as soon as Don Cipriano had set forth—cipher telegraphic communications with an acquaintance at the port of Tierra Blanca. Then she sought the President.

"Don Cipriano has started for Rio de Adrar," she reported. "Señor Kent has disappeared."

The smile on the red lips in the presidential beard stiffened. "You could not hold him? Yet he loved you!"

"I said," replied the lady with a toss of her delicate chin, "that he did not yet know it."

"A pity," Ruiz reflected, "that he should

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be so slow of wit. We do not want any of his nation's navy in Catamarca. Such an appearance might cool revolutionary ardor."

"Aid it, rather. His government has yet to recognize yours."

"We want no official foreign spectators, yet it seems likely this meddler has started for Tierra Blanca."

Eulalia laughed. "And that he may be delayed *en route*. I have not been sleeping."

Don Ricardo expressed his admiration for her diplomatic talent.

"You keep Alvaro Lopez at hand?" inquired his visitor.

"Assuredly—and there is room, as you well know, for two passengers. But let us hope not to need him."

"And the yacht?"

His Excellency could laugh now. Lopez had had his last practice-flight: if Captain Crespo, on the yacht, heard the airplane fly by night or saw it fly by day, he was to set sail instantly, to pick up its passengers at Maldonado. Otherwise, the yacht was ready to take them to Habana—New York—the Riviera." Señor Ruiz laughed again. "But that is not what is so amusing about the yacht."

The señorita's eyes asked her question.

"That yacht," pursued the President, "is known to be my hobby. So each evening I visit it; but first I go to the wine-cellars of this palace."

"That is not good for the nation's gold reserve," she nodded, "but it is beneficial to ours."

"Still another thing amusing, my Eulalia: Who, think you—warned that there may be a bloody revolution in favor of that rascal Barboza, and that a means of temporary escape may be needed—who, since a day during your absence in Habana, guards this yacht?"

"Not Colonel Jouanne?"

"None other. Honest Jouanne! Is not this droll? He has no conception of what I bring aboard, save that it is part of my fortune left from my donations to the State—and he and his men will be fighting for it and us at the harbor-mouth when we go sailing!"

She evidently thought it quite as droll as did the President; but she had a cautious mind for all her mirth.

"In your absence might he not investigate?"

"That incorruptible one? He knows but to obey."

"Still, there are always mutterings, rumors, going about the city, even in the best of times. Don Cipriano might wish them to reach him. If only I had some influence over Colonel Jouanne; if only he possessed a heart——"

"I believe, then, he does not possess even eyes! Yet he respects you: I have carefully said to him that, when the popular prejudice is overcome, I shall marry you."

"Did not that alone make him dislike me?"

"I say he has neither likes nor dislikes: he has only orders."

She pondered. "I fear the poison of Barboza. Give me a pass to the yacht, Ricardo. I shall sound this honest Jouanne. After all, I am a woman."

On her way to the harbor, she saw the *Senator Reed* steaming for the open sea. So much for Mr. Bridgeman! . . .

JUST behind the curtain of the jungle, something moved.

Buster, in the center of the basin, wheeled. With the intrenching tools forming part of that hurriedly purchased outfit from Rio de Adrar, he had been hopelessly prodding the recently upturned earth beside a fallen column. A green lizard scuttled through dry grass, a yard away. Had it been the noise of this reptile's progress that pierced the idle clamor of Kent's spade? But the sound, whatever it was, issued from a farther point.

Despite his weariness, despite the bitter heat, the first half-hour following Buster's arrival had been given to a search for the jewels he was sure were gone. Don Cipriano, Kent soon understood, must originally have distributed his store among several spots within the ruins: the young man's reconnaissance was as thorough as it was feverish, but it was undertaken in the foreknowledge of defeat. The somebody who had preceded him had been as thorough as, lacking a large equipment for excavation, was possible. The figure of the Minister of Finance had long since been dismissed from Buster's calculations: the President had used Trujillo as a stool-pigeon, to protect Cipriano and so save

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the revolution. Therefore, only the chief of Secret Service remained in the reckoning. Well, that feared short-cut through the jungle seemed to have proved effective. Kent was about to throw down his useless spade when the noise startled him.

What was it? Not Hipólito. The Indian lay beneath an encroaching tree, where he had thrown himself on their arrival, heedless even of the insects swarming over him.

Buster, still apparently intent upon the digging, took stock of his position. Upright in the center of that clearing, he presented a perfect mark. He had one doubtful ally: a sleeping Indian. He had an army automatic that he barely knew how to use.

There came a loud crack. Something whistled past his ear.

Kent leaped the pile of masonry and dropped flat on the other side. A rifle-shot. His untrained ears had played him false in receiving the sound that preceded it: the attack came from the other side.

Behind him he heard a cry and the crash of underbrush. The deserting Hipólito had plunged into the thicket.

Another shot. A puff of powdered stone sprang into the heavy air from that fallen pillar which scantily sheltered Buster. Cautiously he poked his head around one end. Though no figure was visible before the mat of vines that faced him, a faint curl of smoke hung lazily there.

Buster jerked free his automatic and fired at the smoke wreath. His unaccustomed finger tightened on the trigger: the weapon barked and barked. Through its flashes, he saw two men running forward, rifles in their hands.

His pistol grew silent—empty. He snatched up his spade. Before he could raise it, a rifle was at his breast:

"The señor will put up his hands."

The man was ominously polite. Buster obeyed.

"Careful," called the other man.

In answer, a short, puffy personage in riding clothes emerged from the vine-screen: Barboza-Cheavey.

"Well done!" he cried. "Stand aside—but stand ready." They drew off, and he confronted their captive. "Have you got another gun?"

He was savagely angry; the veins stood out on his temples. But he was patently by no means so sure of himself as he wanted Buster to believe.

"I'm unarmed," said Kent.

"Then you can put down your hands."

Buster wished that the man were not quite so much afraid: a coward is always dangerous. "What are you going to do with me?"

A queer touch of pride brushed Cheavey; it alleviated, somewhat, his ferocity.

"I'm going to take you to Catamarca City and lock you up. I'm President of Catamarca—or will be in a few hours after we get there. Well, I'll turn you loose, as soon as that's arranged—on two conditions."

Somehow Buster felt confidence returning. He tried to utter a guarded reply with seeming spontaneity:

"It begins to look as if you'd made it no-trump and held all the cards for a grand slam. What's the damage?"

"You'll have to do what Bridgeman did. I put him aboard the *Senator Reed* after he'd sworn to an affidavit that he'd made a mistake in my identity. In your case, your word of honor'll do."

"Thanks. First condition. What's the next?"

"You must have guessed the next. I want the jewels that you've dug up here."

BUSTER tried to think. Cheavey puffed. "I can *take* them if I must!"

Was the man trying to pretend he really didn't have those jewels? And if so, why?

"Try it," said Buster.

Cheavey called his guard. "Search this man."

They obeyed and found nothing.

"You were hiding the stuff again! That's what you were doing! I wonder why." Cheavey waved to his Secret Service agents and pointed to the pillar. "Dig there! Hurry!"

They fell to, frantically.

"I haven't the loot," said Buster, "and you know it."

The earth flew right and left. "You know where it is."

"Sure: *you've* got it."

"I've half a mind to shoot you."

"That wouldn't help, but neither will this repair-gang play. Why *don't* you?"

"Only because it would bring the whole U. S. A. nosing around Catamarca. Oh",

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—Cheavey broke off petulantly—"where's the use of lying, Kent?"

"You said you'd take my word of honor: I tell you I haven't got your swag and never had it."

The agents had torn away all the fresh earth about the pillar. "Then try over there!" cried Cheavey. "Try everywhere. It's *got* to be found!" He turned again to Buster. "That was about my freedom; this is about my jewels: when it comes to jewels, I wouldn't take the word of honor of the Archbishop of Catamarca."

"All right," said Buster. All that worried him was the puzzle of what could possibly be Cheavey's motive for deception. The bluff seemed absurd. He sat upon the pillar. "Dig and be damned."

He was taken at his word. If Cheavey really did need proof, he soon received it.

"Where *have* you hidden them?" he demanded.

"I said I didn't have them," answered Buster, in slow disgust, "and I said you did."

The first portion of his sentence carried, in its final iteration, a shade of conviction, and, by the same token, the latter part left its speaker less confident than before. But, just as the words were uttered, the two unarmed men engaged in conversation, and the pair of Secret Service agents, now armed only with tools, became aware of the presence of a newcomer. He was already halfway across the basin; a lean, clean-shaven man, quietly dressed—a man with a beak nose, high cheek-bones and a hard eye.

"Trujillo!" cried Cheavey.

"Of course," thought Buster. "I'd stopped believing *he* was headed for these parts. I wonder how it happened the President didn't lie about *that*, too!"

If the Señor Orellano y Trujillo felt any tension in the atmosphere, he gave no hint. Quite as if such a meeting were usual, he bowed punctiliously to Cheavey and secured the presentation of Kent.

But Cheavey could not long conceal his anxiety:

"I thought your interest was in the other temple, the one to the northwest. Wasn't it understood that this was my property——"

"You must forgive my trespass, señor," said Trujillo, gravely. "I should not think of digging here: it was by chance that I walked in this direction."

"Oh, yes, of course," said Cheavey, and the words rasped. "You are alone?"

"I have seven men, who have been helping me in my excavations over there." He made a backward gesture: three or four swarthy fellows had emerged from the underbrush. "If you are sufficiently interested in my poor attempts at anthropological research, I should be enchanted——"

"Seven men? No, no, thanks. Not now. How long will you be in this—this general neighborhood?"

"We are on our way to Catamarca City. It is thus that we happened to come here: we are taking this route."

Mangus Cheavey turned from Trujillo to Buster and back again. "And you two never met before? Oh, no, I remember!" He puffed, he panted: he was one of those in whom the process of thought, although proficient, is painful and nearly always accompanied by physical manifestations. Now he patently achieved first what he conceived to be a clear comprehension of the situation and, thereon, a great decision. "So you are on your way back to Catamarca City, Señor Trujillo? That's fortunate. We'll all go with you."

IT WAS late in the night when he bent over Buster's hammock. Explanations, regrets, accusations against the Minister of Finance, bribes for Kent and threats for all tumbled out of lips fearful lest each syllable might betray their owner to his sleeping companions:

"He's got them—somewhere—Trujillo: and I believed he was an honest man! He thinks I'm up to something: I can see that. I never was so disappointed in anybody! We're both Americans, you and me, and we've got to stick together. You can't trust any of these foreigners. I'd offer to whack up, if I thought you'd do it, but of course you won't. Anyhow, you don't want a dago-Indian to have 'em: you can't win yourself, so you'd rather see an American win—eh?

"And I'm sure he's got 'em in his clothes—he's probably working some side-game with the President—only I daren't search him here, when he's got his crowd with him. Maybe there'll be a chance to get them on the way. I've got enough friends in town, if there isn't, to take 'em away from him as soon as he gets there. Nothing's lost if I

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hurry. And I'll tell you this: there's somebody working for me back there. I'm going to be President, Mr. Kent; and if you feel like playing in with me, here's the time to say so. Otherwise, once we're in Catamarca City, you get locked up till I get your word of honor."

"Oh, go back to bed," said Buster loudly. "I've got to get *some* sleep!"

PRESIDENT RUIZ sat on the accustomed balcony, facing the renaissance Cathedral of Santo Basilio and overlooking the Plaza de la Constitución. He had had a hard day, but a profitable one, and, reviewing his accomplishments, he pronounced them good. Don Ricardo regarded his people in the square below with a beneficent sadness, even while he considered his immediate future with high content.

The Chamber of Deputies was scheduled to adjourn at noon next day, and in accord with immemorial custom—that is to say, is accord with a custom dating from the happy Era of Liberation and the age of Simon Bolivar—the assembled members, with the Senate at the bar, had respectfully summoned their chief executive to learn whether his pleasure had any other business to lay before them. The chief executive's responding oration, made from the tribune, was a polished and lengthy negative: sixteen hours hence, the members would pass an almost unanimous vote of confidence and a wholly unanimous vote of thanks, and go home—in good time to leave the fate of the country to the unsuspected issue between Ruiz and Barboza.

But the President's speech had, in reality, been far more than a formal commendation of the legislative labors. Knowing, as his hearers did not, that it was his valedictory, he made it the effort of his public career.

The Catamarcans are proverbially an emotional folk. Floor and galleries cheered him to the echo. Ladies wept, and some gentlemen. They did not know what the morrow had in store, and they of course reserved the right to alter their political opinions; but they knew an artist when they heard one. Even stolid Colonel Jouanne showed something less than his habitual military immobility.

Well, the President reflected, no one could justly accuse him of insincerity. He was a native of Catamarca; here, too, he had acquired his fortune—or the fortune that was in his possession. It is not an unalloyed pleasure to leave one's country, even for that country's, and one's own, good.

"Not," he reflected to his seventh cigarette, "that I really want to remain."

The military band had been playing every Viennese waltz from "The Beautiful Blue Danube" to the "Kinemakönigin." Lights sparkled from a score of cafés, and at the tables on the pavements in front of them soldiers and men of affairs drank their wine and laughed with the ladies of the capital. A cooling air blew from the waterfront—the waterfront where the presidential yacht waited—and overhead the stars hung large and low. It was just such a night as that on which he had confided in Eulalia.

"The Señorita Savedra y Loreto," whispered a servant at the open French window and, at a shadowy wave of the executive's hand, left singer and President together.

"I kiss your feet!"

She interrupted Don Ricardo's fervent courtesies:

"No, I shall not sit. This morning you told me you were ready. Is that word still good?"

He dropped the hand he had been kissing: "You have news?"

"The first of my runners has arrived."

"Runners? Cipriano is returning?"

"There is a little strike somewhere on the railroad, and travelers must resort to horses. The telegraphs northward are inactive, and I have to depend on runners. It is annoying—no more than that. Good; I say the first has arrived, and," the lady added, "Señor Barboza is due to-morrow morning."

"Not afternoon? The Chamber does not adjourn until midday."

"What difference—if *you* are ready? *Are* you, Ricardo?"

He stroked his beard. "Yes. I could have wished for one more vote of thanks—but 'Yes.'"

"What greed!" she laughed. "You cannot have everything!"

"But I *have*"—he gallantly pulled himself together—"since I have you. Has *he* the jewels?"

"Did you fancy he would be wearing them?"

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"But he *must* have them if he is to have his revolution and we our excuse. . How am I to collect my moneys abroad and retain my freedom, except as a political refugee?"

"My good Ricardo, he knew where the jewels were; he went for them; he returns, and there is no word of his molestation. Of course he has them!"

"Then we go to-morrow. If all is as fully prepared against me as you have reported, he can strike within two hours of his arrival —no?"

"I understand he plans to strike within one hour."

"There must be enough fighting to constitute legally a revolution as distinct from a *coup d'état*. There is no change of plan?"

"How should I know, since Don Cipriano has been away?"

"From the citadel"—the President chuckled good-humoredly—"they are to go at once to the National Treasury! I shall warn Jouanne to-night and persuade him not to mass all his men in the Plaza. We shall want one company at the harbor and one, mounted, at our back door, to guard our progress to the yacht before the revolutionists round the corner at the Café Republicano. You had better call here early in the morning, señorita." His tone grew tender. "Say six o'clock. He cannot arrive before six—Cipriano—can he?"

She thought not.

"I shall have here a priest from the cathedral."

"Lopez, the aviator: is *he* here now?"

"Really, Eulalia!" The President protested. "Your concern for Lopez is depressing. Everything is simple. We shall not require wings."

"*Is* he here?"

"He is bidding good-by to his old parents in Heredia. But he will be back in the early morning! I tell you we cannot need him. Do you wish proof? I should enjoy a drive: motor with me to the yacht to see that all is indeed in readiness."

The lady laughed again. "Empty-handed?"

"Well"—he met her humor—"there is still much left next door, and there is no reason why it should not be a few bags less before our friends seize the treasury to-morrow. Come with me: it is amusing."

He led the way into the next room. Behind a curtain, he touched the hidden spring in a panel. It slid aside. The President took up an electric torch from a near-by table and began to descend the steep and narrow stairway that the panel had revealed.

Holding her skirts carefully, the lady followed. She followed until the stairs stopped and opened into the darkness of a musty cellar filled with great casks and high bins whence protruded the noses of cobwebbed bottles.

The torch played elfishly upon them.

"It is not easy to leave all this," sighed His Excellency.

"I am told," murmured Doña Eulalia, "that the best-stocked vaults in the world are on the Riviera."

The President found this very clever. He was expressing his merriment when, having swung aside a mock bin, he confronted the foundations of the building, showed how these had been tunneled by a passage—"The poor man went abroad who contrived it," he explained—and came finally to a huge slab of what appeared to be solid rock. Indeed, a swaying of the torch showed his enjoyment when this rock proved as easily removable as the panel in the palace.

"THE vaults of the National Treasury!" announced the President.

His torch rose upward, but it did not dance over bags of gold. It stopped, because it centered on a man in uniform with a revolver in his hand: Colonel Jouanne.

The President leaped back so quickly that he struck the lady and drove her against the wall of the passage. Before the soldier had moved—before a word was spoken—Don Ricardo had pressed the spring that sent the great rock into place again.

It was as if they had seen a vision. He and Doña Eulalia were facing each other beside a blank wall.

The President dropped his torch. The Señorita Loreto picked it up and turned it on him: sweat stood out on his forehead; his beard jerked grotesquely with the trembling of his hidden chin.

"A—a traitor?" he gasped. "A rival?"

The lady laughed. "Absurd, Your Excellency."

"Then a thief! Honest Jouanne! Who would have believed it? Who is to be relied upon?"

The musical critics of anti-Administration

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newspapers had lately been hinting that hardness was creeping into the voice of "La Dorada." There was something of that new quality in it now as she answered:

"Neither traitor nor thief, Don Ricardo. *A guard.*"

He stared at her. "You mean——" He turned as if to run. "The yacht! We must get to the yacht."

"There is no hurry," she answered. "Nothing more will occur until morning."

At that he reversed and came toward her savagely.

"How do you know all this?"

"Be careful: I have friends in the cellar. Your yacht, señor, has been seized by Colonel Jouanne."

"He was always true to me until——"

"He was always true to his country. The seizure has been quiet—and it was made in the name of the Republic. *Lentamente*, Señor Ruiz! There is some one in the darkness there, only a yard behind you."

Don Ricardo's lifted hands fell to his side. He looked about; some one else was there—a large and official shape: his own body-servant, armed.

"Treason!" the trapped President cried. "You have sold me, you she-Judas!"

She laughed at him.

"You will be quite safe here in the palace—until Don Cipriano arrives."

THE railway strike was on the line between the capital and Acosta, which is only five miles southeast of Rio de Adrar. It was one of those local disputes that are mostly spontaneous, but temporarily effective, and the oddly assorted company of antiquarians from the jungle had been compelled to resort to horseflesh for their means of transport. They came by the State Highway—so called—and, at the farther end of the famous Santo Cirilo Pass, where the road emerges from that narrow cañon in the lofty plateau before its abrupt descent to the Plains of Raquel, there burst upon them the generous view of the valley and of the haven where, because of such mixed motives, they would be.

Behind them yawned the dark mouth of the Pass; its sheer cliffs towered above. Far to the south rose, in the clear air of morning, the jagged peaks of the snow-capped Alajuelas, and, it seemed at their feet, set amid luxuriant greenery, gleamed the City of Catamarca, its flat roofs lighted by the sun, the spires of the cathedral pointing heavenward, and a score of little boats riding the blue waters of its bay. There was no foreign vessel discernible among the shipping; but Cheavey could distinguish the presidential yacht, without its master's flag, and, a mile inshore, at the heart of the town, beside the Plaza, the Palace from which fluttered serenely the tricolor of the Republic.

There had been no chance to rob the uncommunicative Trujillo, and the accident of the strike lost several hours. Nevertheless, the Chief of Secret Service felt elated. He was still ahead of time, for he had originally counted on devoting a full day to his excavations; the thief, whatever other damage was done, had saved him that, and, once these fools were within the city, the one would speedily be forced to disgorge his plunder, the other go behind locked doors—the discontinuance of the telegraphs had prevented communication with his office, or Cheavey would even now be their master. No, things were not bad; somewhere down there in the capital, Eulalia had been busy, and she had had word of him; as far back as Elena, the previous afternoon, he had seen one of her servants, nodded and, while his own party lunched, heard the clatter of the fellow's departure.

"How beautiful!" said the Minister of Finance, gazing over his horse's drooping head at the view before them. "It is a magnificent landscape. I never cease to admire it."

"I wonder," said Buster, very perplexed, "if I shall."

"We must hurry!" said Cheavey. What if they should ask him why? His access of courage had made him imperative.

Nobody, however, just then asked him anything. The little cavalcade was too occupied with the difficulties of its steep progress downward.

The pilgrims swung into the plain. They rode in silence for an hour. The city was now hidden.

Suddenly, from its direction, there came a rumbling sound. Every man of them drew rein.

"What's that?" asked Buster.

Another dull boom came before the puffing Cheavey answered:

"Cannon!"

Everybody's Magazine, November, 1923

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"The revolution!" gasped Buster ruefully. "There goes my insurance-policy!"

Señor Trujillo raised his heavy brows. "Surely there is no revolution?" The booming continued. "Besides, if it were, there would be machine-guns. This sounds like a salvo."

Cheavey's flabby cheeks glowed with relief. "I know: the guns before the Chamber of Deputies!"

"Only," said the Minister of Finance, "if they are celebrating some momentous decision."

"They are," declared Cheavey—"and I can guess what!"

He clapped spurs to his horse and jolted forward. He remembered again the influence of Eulalia and the constitutional power of the Chamber to elect a president for the fulfilment of an unexpired term.

Buster and Trujillo came on, neck-and-neck with him; but the young man had seen enough of Catamarca to be by no means sure that he had not lost his money.

They galloped. Cheavey's flapping cheeks were purple; his hat flew off: he did not stop. The other two principals were better horsemen, but the road was rough; only the lesser members of the company, two secret-service agents and the seven workmen of Trujillo, were at ease.

The roadside houses thickened. There were more people on the highway, and accidents were only just avoided. They came to a guard-house, still a mile beyond the yellow walls of the Old Town, and saw trooping up a group of horsemen, soldiers and civilians, equal in numbers to their own.

Not to halt immediately would be to court collision: the travelers from Rio de Adrar stopped in their tracks.

"What's the trouble now?" asked Buster.

"It seems to be a deputation," the Minister of Finance answered. "You see the señor in the front?" He indicated a broad man with a rosette in his buttonhole. "That is Dr. Atanasio Gondra, President of the Chamber of Deputies."

Mangus Cheavey turned between a snarl and a grin, but the grin conquered, and he swelled to swift importance.

"It *is* a deputation," he said, "and they're looking for me. I have expected this for the last twelve hours. You men are my prisoners, and these gentlemen have come to tell me that Don Ricardo is out of a job—and that I've got his place!"

The head of the advancing column had reached them. Its dozen hats flourished. The broad man with the rosette was speaking:

"We are a duly authorized delegation from the Chamber of Deputies. We have been sent to announce the resignation of Ricardo Ayalo Ruiz from the presidency and officially to notify you, Señor Esteban Orellano y Trujillo, of your legal election as the Chief Executive of the Republic of Catamarca."

PERHAPS Trujillo met the news with a fitting reply. Buster had the impression that Dr. Gondra's announcement left the former Minister of Finance in command of that calm which was the outstanding testimony to his character. It did flash through Kent's brain that Ruiz, in accusing such a man of any theft whatever, had been an outrageous liar, and he did feel that the Catamarcans had at last a really strong man to rule them. But the self-appointed representative of the Independence Indemnity Corporation spared little thought to foreign politics; he had other fish to fry: Mangus Cheavey's astonished eyes were patently seeking an opening in the crowd for their owner's flight.

Already there was a favorable confusion in the re-grouping of the two dozen horses for their ride to the capital, and of this Buster grasped advantage. He nosed his mount up to that of Cheavey, deftly plucked his pistol from its bulging retreat in a jacket side-pocket and, shoving the weapon into his own coat, pressed the muzzle against the embezzler's ribs.

"I don't know how you stand with Trujillo," he said. "I don't think you're ace-high, but I'm not going to take any chances. You trot along beside me."

Cheavey vouchsafed one look of livid malice; but he did as he was told.

"A splendid choice," said a deputy who rode beside Kent. "Trujillo is popular."

"It looks that way. Do you call this a revolution?"

"Not at all, señor—at least not yet. Don Ricardo has resigned. Under pressure? None can ever prove it. Of course, so long as he remains among us—he is still secluded in the palace—there is chance of some

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misguided persons fighting for him; but it is not likely. Certainly the Chamber hopes not; we wish he would go away: revolutions do not help our country's good name abroad."

Well, reflected Buster—always with one eye on the white-faced captive, riding with him in apparent freedom—the event surely resembled more a holiday than a fight. The nearer the deputation approached the core of the town, the denser grew the crowds. Men of all degrees flung hats aloft; women tossed roses, or held children high for a glimpse of the new executive.

Buster's hopes for his mad insurance venture waxed apace; but not for his other mission. His conviction of Trujillo's personal honesty deepened; politics, however, too frequently have an unfortunate habit of interference with private character. Especially in this garden of conspiracy, who dared say to what extent some far-flung roots of the Cheavey greed might not entangle those of the Trujillo flower? Of course, Buster could fight, but publicity before arrest was precisely what the Travelers' and Tailors' Trust Company did not want. There was a treaty of extradition between the United States of America and Catamarca, but the former country had for five years failed to recognize the *de facto* government of the latter, and it must rest, after all, with a Catamarcan court to decide whether—no matter what his evidence—the person he produced really was Mangus Cheavey.

THERE was no long time for debate. The deputation clattered down the avenue and into the Plaza from which, at right angles to the Cathedral and the Presidential Palace, rise the long steps and Corinthian pillars of the Chamber of Deputies. Troops held back the huzzaing multitude and cleared a square and an entrance to it.

Buster all but rubbed his eyes. In the open space stood at ease a quite authentic company of American Marines.

"Here," he said to Cheavey, "you ride over there with me!"

Cheavey gave the Marines one green glance: "I won't."

"You will if you don't want to be shot," said Buster. He was so excited that he meant it, and this his captive realized. Unnoted, they drew away from the deputation, and Buster, bending from his saddle, addressed the slim young captain: "Pardon me for not getting off this nag. I'm an American, and you don't know how glad I am to see you."

Captain Matthews had received a similar greeting more than once in his brief military career:

"That's all right. Our ship put in behind that promontory, so's nobody'd be expecting us; but we're here to protect American interests."

"I didn't know there were any," said Buster, still watching Cheavey.

"Oh, yes. It seems there's a wild man down here starting a branch of the Independence Indemnity concern."

"That's me," admitted Buster. "Only, how in thunder did you folks hear about it? Trujillo couldn't have sent word himself—and he didn't know."

"It *was* kind of queer. Not Trujillo—though I'm glad they've elected him: he's on the level. No, the old man got a message through a Tierra Blanca fisherman—some sort of spy. Trujillo's crowd don't want an open revolution, and they must have figured our presence'd put a damper on that kind of thing, and perhaps that a government set up under our inspection'd fetch recognition from the Washington stiffs. But all the message mentioned was you, and"—the Captain smiled—"it was signed by a lady."

Buster was ashamed of himself for blushing. Then he was ashamed of himself for never once having so much as wondered what, in all this mess, had been the fate of the Doña Eulalia.

Somehow, his eyes wandered to the Presidential Palace, and there, from between the curtains of a high window, he saw a white arm wave.

"This man," said Buster, with the most cursory of nods at Cheavey, "is a New York embezzler that I came down to get. Look after him for a minute, will you?"

Mangus Cheavey nearly fell from his horse. "I protest!" he panted. "The man lies. I'm the Chief——"

"Oh, he's Secret Service Chief of Catamarca, all right," Buster interrupted, "and I haven't a warrant, and it's all as irregular as——"

But Captain Matthews had seen the arm and could himself interpret: "That's all right; only don't be too long."

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Not waiting to hear the torrent of words on which Cheavey embarked, Buster forced his horse through the crowd to the Palace door, where, apparently warned of his coming, a Guards officer—Colonel Jouanne, no less—admitted him.

He was afraid to see Eulalia—fearful of what sentimental reward she might demand for her care of him. However, he was equally clear that thank her he must, and he was immensely relieved when, alone with him in a vast reception-room, her undeniable charm concerned itself with business. She cut short protestations:

"Take this document, señor. I do not understand it all, but it grants you power to extradite a fellow-countryman named Mangus Cheavey, '*alias*,' it says, 'Cipriano Barboza'; and it has been made out, in accord with Catamarcan laws, by a friend who is a Justice of the Supreme Court."

THERE came a rattle like that of a sawmill overhead, and a roar, this time of anger, from the populace in the Square.

"And that," laughed the lady, "is our ex-president beginning his unpursued flight over the Alajuelas Mountains to Maldonado. I know, for I myself permitted the entrance of his aviator. You have your prisoner; you have saved your insurance: did I not call myself your best good friend, Don Buster?"

All that Kent could do was stammer: "Do you mean to say this show—this whole blow-up—is your work?"

She was pleased with his amazement:

"It was all planned long ago—before I went on the journey from which you saw me return: your search for Señor Barboza-Cheavey, it only hurried me a little. I wanted ever to secure a good government for this people which had adopted me—even when, doing it, they suspected and hated me. Then, when you arrived, I saw that perhaps it could so be done as to secure your nation's recognition. Sit down. No, by me—so."

She patted a sofa. He had to obey. She lit for herself the cigarette that he nervously refused.

"Always I wanted no bloodshed: there is enough of that in opera. Therefore I pitted one against other."

In her rippling laughter, he understood that he, too, had been one of her pawns. He had feared she loved him; his natural pride was not altogether happy now to realize that she didn't.

"You fooled *me*."

"So?" She blew complacent smoke. "But I am indeed a poor liar, so, not wishing to be caught, I told—mostly—the truth. Even to you! Also it was easiest to tell everybody almost everything about nearly everybody else. When you conspire in your colossal republic, my friend, remember that the more truth you tell, the less likely you are to be suspected of conspiring."

"Thanks," said Buster.

"Then," she ran joyously on, "there was another reason for hurry: Don Ricardo might perhaps have got too much government gold, not on his yacht, but out of the country. He is what your clever people call 'some fast worker,' eh?"

Trujillo—"the most honest of men"—had been early scheduled to go to the jungle, on the date he went: there he would be distant from suspicion, yet produceable at the opportune moment, of which, when it came, secret runners informed him. The señorita realized that Jouanne's loyalty was for the country of his birth rather than for the person of its president: on an unaccompanied afternoon visit to the yacht, she had shown him that the bags beneath the presidential mattress bore government seals.

"Then all was settled. The funds at my private disposal were small; but some of those bags—it was for the public good—went to buy the deputies: deputies are cheaper than generals. Brave Jouanne arranged to shut up Don Ricardo and to extract his abdication."

"I see." Buster was really beginning to do so.

"And," she smiled, "you also I should have had shut up, but that you were too sudden."

"Me?"

"You are so impulsive: you might hurt or be hurt. I wished you safe where—if Cipriano happened to make real difficulties—you could be produced and save bloodshed by telling who he was. Till I heard from an agent in Tierra Blanca, I thought you had gone to the war-ship. Why did you go otherwhere?"

He countered her question: "Won't Ruiz starve?"

She would not press him: "He has much

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money in New York. That Catamarca will not contest with him: the new government wants no scandal. Let us call it a pension."

"I believe," said Buster sulkily, "that you're in love with him."

"No, no!" she laughed. "But one does not arrest a suitor solely for the reason of not loving him."

"Then how about Cheavey?"

The lady's eyes were unfathomable. She made a little grimace. "He was too fat," she said.

She turned to diplomacy. Wouldn't Don Buster secure Washington's recognition of the new government? Trujillo was a man with a vision for the public weal. Handsome, chivalrous——

"It looks to me," Kent expostulated, "as if you're as much interested in him as a human being as you are in his statesmanship."

The lady tossed away her cigarette.

"Of course. Now it will be made public. We have been secretly married these two years."

For long thereafter, Buster regretted the sole words his astonishment framed: "Will the people stand for that?"

But the Señora Trujillo was too happy to care. "Yesterday it was 'that huzzy'; tomorrow I shall be the people's idol and," she added with a dignity new to her hearer, "shall, for my husband, devote my life to remaining that. They love him, they will love me. In the Chamber, in his speech of acceptance, he is generously telling them that not he, but I, am their deliverer."

He came in, Trujillo, looking all she had called him, before Buster could make his apologies. After her kiss, her first words were: "The people?"

Trujillo patted her shoulder: "They are content."

Kent would have gone, but she would not permit it until he had admired the new president. "Is he not wonderful?" It was the real Eulalia at last. Only once her former mockery peeped out: "You will insure him also against revolution—yes? But he is so popular we should waste money to pay for it!" Not until then did she return to the affairs of their visitor. "And you recovered those jewels?"

It was the last thing needed to complete Buster's embarrassment. "Why—Cheavey hasn't got 'em. I've frisked him a dozen times. I thought perhaps your husband——"

Rapidly she explained to Trujillo.

"My presence at 'Don Cipriano's temple' was only to keep an eye on a possible rival," said the President. "But if jewels have been lost because of a Catamarcan official, Catamarca shall pay. Beyond that, I know nothing, señor: you have my word of honor."

And Buster looked into those clear eyes and had to believe him! "Certainly," he said. "Don't mention it."

The room was circling round him, though, with a firm grip, Trujillo shook his hand.

He sailed, with a carefully guarded Cheavey, that night for New York: on the presidential yacht, which, relieved of its gold, Trujillo placed at his disposal. As Buster passed, on his way to it, through the Plaza de la Constitución, a cooling air blew from the harbor, and the stars hung large and low. The military band was playing the old waltzes, beside the fountain. Lights sparkled from the score of cafés, and, at the tables on the pavements in front of them, officers and men-about-town sipped their wine and laughed with the ladies of the capital. One only sign there was of the recent disturbance: from the tower of the distant citadel, a searchlight played, now and again, over the old town. Its shaft flickered over the balcony of the Presidential Palace and picked out the figure of a lean man standing there, illuminated his ascetic face and showed a woman beside him, their hands clasped on the railing. The people at the tables rose and cheered.

"I'd rather *like* to insure that fellow," said Buster, "all on my own. It'd be a gilt-edged investment. It'd pay me what I'll never get now: the reward for those jewels. . . ."

THEY were all—all of them who now had any concern there—in Stanwood Atwater's office on the ground-floor of the Travelers' and Tailors' Trust Company: Atwater belonged to that rapidly obsolescent species, the trust-company president who sometimes visits his trust company; his office even had a door of unobscured glass that looked directly upon the counting-rooms. Mangus Cheavey had just been removed, his sadness somewhat alleviated by the realization that jail would sequester him from the tongue of an indignant wife:

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Mrs. Cheavey still sat at one side of the Atwater desk, her loose cheeks naturally reddened by her own philippic eloquence. She gave the elder Kent a histrionic permission to light a cigar.

"By the way, Buster," that obviously proud parent interjected, "there was a man in to see me the other day—fellow named Bridgeman—talking about false arrest."

"Yes, I know," said Buster, who was in a nervous hurry: "Cheavey arrested him."

"*Cheavey?*"—Atwater had been smelling irregularities. "The thief arrest the detective?"

"Yes," said Buster: "things were like that down there. 'Were': they're not any more. Now, then, Mr. Atwater, I've brought back your man: are you ready to take out that policy?"

"When you make good, young fellow. The agreement was for the man *and* the jewels. Hand them over."

It was come! Buster had been dreading this moment all the way from Catamarca. He hung his head.

"I couldn't find 'em."

"Buster!" cried his father.

"They were never put on the market," declared Atwater. "I'll swear to that."

Mrs. Cheavey fanned herself with a scented handkerchief and registered proper dismay.

"No," said Buster, "I don't believe they were, but I never saw any of them." He hesitated, yet truth compelled the conclusion: "Except Mrs. Atwater's pearls—I saw them on her."

"On Sarah?" Atwater couldn't follow him.

"No, around the Señora Trujillo's neck. She's got a corking neck and shoulders."

The banker bent forward, his brows in a tangle. "Seems to have corked you. Shut up, J. L.! This is my affair, and it's a serious family matter, I tell you. If you saw that woman with Mrs. Atwater's necklace, my lad, why didn't you get it?"

"Well," Buster elucidated, "at the time, it mightn't have been safe, and when I met her again, she wasn't wearing 'em, and I hadn't the heart to ask her."

"The idea!" said Mrs. Cheavey.

Atwater shot a "Silence, madam," over his shoulder. He glared at Buster like a man on the thin edge of apoplexy:

"You hadn't the heart to ask a receiver of stolen goods for my wife's pearls? What'd you mean 'hadn't the heart'?"

"She *isn't* a receiver of stolen goods, or else——".

Atwater picked up a pen and threw it down again. "Bah!"

"She's a plain adventuress!" protested John L. Kent, who saw his boy as innocence led astray.

"She's nothing of the kind," said Buster warmly; "and I'm not in love with her, either. Adventuress? She was all the time fighting for her husband, for recognition of the new government by the United States, and for the real good of the Catamarcans, who hated her."

"We don't care anything about them, young man."

"Well, it'd be a good thing if you did—if the U. S. A. thought a little more about its next-door neighbors: I've found that out, anyhow. And what your trust company *has* got from me, Mr. Atwater, it owes to her—Señora Trujillo. I don't deserve any credit——"

"You're not getting any too much, my boy."

"It was all her doing," Buster determinedly pursued: "all I did was good luck." He had gone on record for her; he rose, thrust his hands into his trousers pockets and, giving his back to his audience, stared moodily out of the glass door and into the banking room.

"None of that," said Atwater. "I propose to learn——"

But just then Buster shouted "*Wow!*"

HE FLUNG open the door and ran among the depositors. He rushed up to a tiny man with a white beard streaked yellow, the eyes of a spectacled bird and a general air of absent-mindedness—a scholarly man who clasped to his breast a badly done-up brown-paper parcel.

"My dear Mr. Kent," said Professor McReynolds, R.P.D., Dr. Philol. and M.Ar., "they told me at your father's place of business you were here: I wanted your advice. You're hurting my hand a little, Mr. Kent. I came back sooner than I expected, because I have made a discovery of remarkable anthropological interest. It is so remarkable that I am afraid to carry it alone all the way to Pottawatomie County——"

"Yes, yes!" said Buster.

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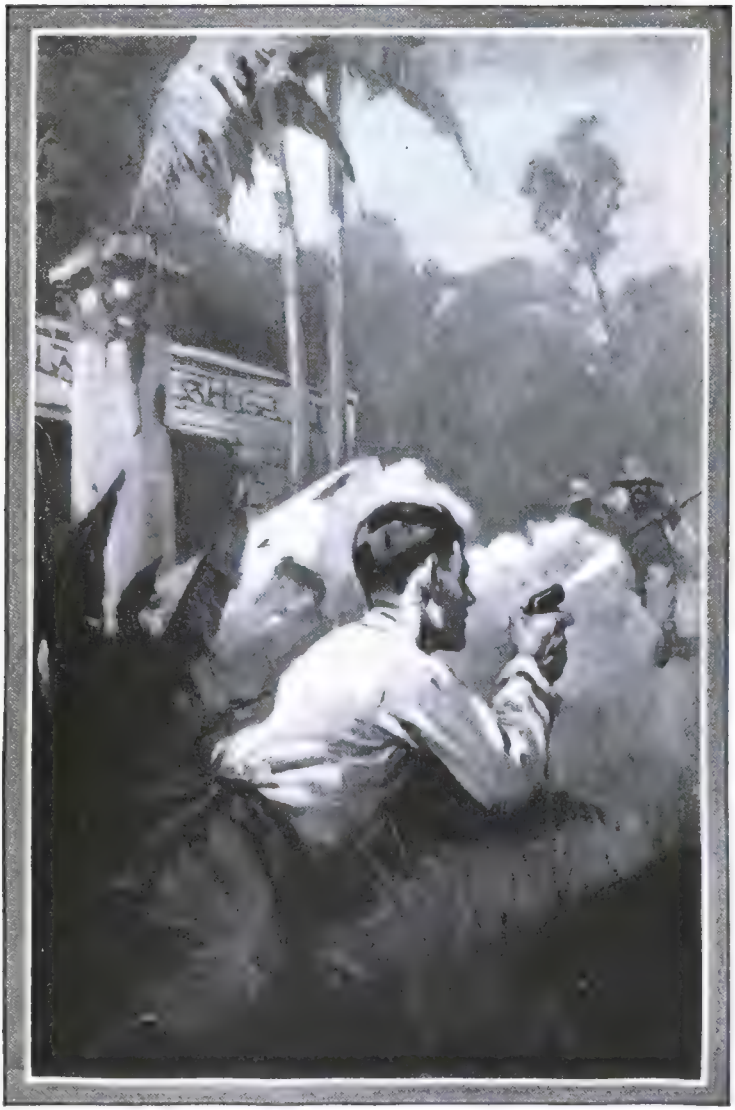

Through the flashes of his automatic Buster saw two men running forward, rifles in their hands. His pistol grew silent—empty.

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"And I regret to say that, even in science, men steal——"

"I know, professor."

"Other men's ideas, Mr. Kent. I thought you might advise me how, until I shall have published my paper, I might store these at some place, here in New York, where they will have safe keeping." He nodded at the parcel.

"You come along with me," said Buster, "and, if they're what I think, they'll be kept absolutely safe."

Dr. McReynolds skipped trustfully beside him. "You *can't* think what they are. Of probably little intrinsic value—for we know that the ancient Catamarcans were utterly ignorant of precious stones—I believe that, by the ingenuity, delicacy and durability of their settings, they prove a degree of civilization——"

Buster stopped him. "You found them in a temple north of Rio de Adrar, didn't you?"

The professor blinked. "How did you know?"

"Listen, doctor," said Buster, as he stopped with his hand on the knob of Mr. Atwater's office-door. "I think you're on the wrong track. If you are, nobody'll ever know your mistake, and I'll see that there's an endowed chair of your specialty in Wufford University, and you can sit in it as long as you live, except when you feel like going abroad and digging—and you'll do that every year, if you want to, with all the latest equipment for an up-to-date excavation!"

"IF THERE'S a notary-public in this bank," said Mrs. Cheavey a half-hour later, "I'll sign your release as soon as this gentleman"—she indicated Atwater—"makes out a certified check for the rewards—and I've cashed it."

"Anything to get rid of you," snapped the ungallant Atwater, pressing a button in his desk: "I'm authorized by the owners to pay 'em. But"—he turned again to Buster—"those pearls aren't here. This doesn't include *our* bargain, or square me with Sarah."

And almost immediately he was squared: a bank-guard ushered in that non-political commander of the Catamarcan presidential yacht, Captain Crespo, short, pudgy, a prosperous replica, darkly done, of Mangus Cheavey, who had brought Buster to New York.

The captain flourished his gold-braided cap right and left, but especially in the direction of her who had been Minnie Milson. To her he had been officially sent—he had diligently found her Bronx address and thence traced her here—but upon his non-official and middle-aged susceptibilities, it was clear, she made a distinct impression. He had had entrusted to his care, by Her Excellency the Señora Trujillo, a gift for her and a letter, both of which he forthwith delivered. It was in English:

> I know your husband, and therefore I know your distress. As a token of my sympathy, as a proof of my honor, I send you these pearls, which he mistakenly lent me, when he gratuitously offended me by the confession of his treatment of you and by the offer of his unworthy heart. I weep with you. There is, I understand, a reward: collect it.
>
> Accept, Madame, I pray you, my most sincere regards. EULALIA.

"Now will you believe me?" asked Buster of Atwater—"and will you be a sport and sign up for that policy?"

"Oh, shut up!" said Atwater—he was all but chemically testing his wife's pearls. "Of course I will."

John L. Kent clapped his son's broad back. "Some boy!" said he. "You can head any department in the Independence Corporation that you feel like heading."

"It was all the Señora Trujillo," said his son.

"But you've got a drag in Washington, Stan," persisted the father. "See what you can do about that recognition business."

The president of the Travelers' and Tailors' Trust Company grinned broadly: he had identified the pearls.

"Leave it to me," said the banker. "Just now I've got to cable Sarah."

Captain Crespo bent to Buster's ear. "Imprisonment for a felony: that is ground for divorce in your United States, is it not? What a dowry!"

"Sure it is," said Buster. "I'll take the head of our Information Department, father. I've got to earn some money: Professor McReynolds has won all that Aunt Florence left me." He held out his hand to Atwater, while Minnie Milson waited for her checks. "*Con Dios, señor.*"

The banker's grin became sheepish.

"Oh, shut up!" he said again. "You young fellows know it all, don't you?"

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For His Lady Friend

His Hands Were Useless—yet They Served to Win a Fight and a Knowledge Greater—and Less—than Victory

By Tod Robbins

"THE fightin' game ain't what it was—no, not by a damn sight! Why, I remember the time when a guy would take a beatin' that would stop a mule for a ten-spot note; but now they puts up a holler if they gets their hair mussed. And as for the coin—even these third-raters won't take off their swaller-tail coats under a hundred."

Billy, the bootlegger, was in an unusually loquacious mood. It was the slack hour for business—somewhere between eight and nine of a blustering winter night—and as yet there were no furtive customers stealing in for fiery drinks of what in the year 1922 passed for whisky. The untidy little room, with its commingled odors of an apothecary shop and a saloon, was deserted except for the two of us and a slender, silent young man who was assiduously filling a row of bottles with liquid out of an evil-smelling jug.

"No, sir," Billy continued with a solemn shake of his head, "the ring has become that genteel that a pug what ain't had a lady governess and a college edication don't know how to act right, once he climbs through the ropes." He paused to pass the tip of his tongue over dry lips.

"Hey, Micky!" he called to the silent young man. "Bring over one of them bottles and fill up Mr. Overton's glass. This is on the house."

Micky obeyed; and for the first time that evening I had an opportunity to study the man. Still in his early twenties, slim and straight as a poplar, he had one of those faces that seem less destructible than anything that can be created out of mere flesh and bone. It was a face of marble, and not unpleasing, with its straight nose, forcible chin and the Irish blue eyes which looked out at the world squarely between heavy black lashes.

"A fine, upstanding fellow," I thought to myself. But the next instant I took it back in a breath, for I had caught a glimpse of his hands.

They were not large; on the contrary, they were small for a man of his build. But what mattered was the fact that they had lost all semblance to human hands. It was as though they had at one time been held on an anvil under a shower of crushing blows from a blacksmith's hammer. They were dead hands, broken hands—hands that suggested sea-spiders with great swollen backs.

"Micky, there's somebody knockin'," Billy said suddenly. "Take a squint through the glass. I don't want no more cops droppin' in for a handout."

In a couple of strides Micky was at the door. "It's only a girl," he announced. "Will I let her in?"

"Sure, let her in." Billy turned to me with a wry smile. "If it ain't the cops come for a handout to keep their mouths closed, it's the skirts on this avenue who think I'm in business so's they won't get a thirst. A guy's got a fine chance to make a honest livin' these days!"

The girl proved to be a peroxide blonde of a nondescript age. She advanced jerkily on legs which were too much exposed. She had the short, broad feet and thick ankles of the neighborhood. Beneath a mask-like composition of paint and powder, her jaws moved rhythmically on a piece of gum.

"Hello, kid!" Billy growled. "What's eatin' *you?*"

To my amazement, for the calcimined

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face of the girl had indicated no emotion of any kind, she suddenly burst into hoarse sobbing and slumped into the nearest chair. Black tears, colored by mascaro, coursed down her cheeks.

"Is it *him* again?" Billy asked, not unkindly. "Has he been beatin' you up?"

She nodded and her sobbing redoubled.

"Give her a shot of rye, Micky," Billy ordered. And when his remedy for all mortal ills had been applied and the girl had wiped away her inky tears, he said genially:

"Now tell us all about it, kid. Get if off your chest."

"He's worse than he ever was!" she whimpered. "There ain't no livin' with him! Last week he kicked me downstairs; and only this mornin', he gave me a awful lacin' with the buckle-end of his belt. You just oughter to see my back. It looks like a hunk of hamburger steak."

"What'd you bein' doin', kid?"

"I ain't done nothin' wrong, I swear to Gawd! Just went to a swell dance with Fireman Joe. Neither of us meant no harm by it. But him! You just oughter see how he carried on! He swore he'll do me in the next time, and he's bought a sharp knife to do it."

Billy frowned reflectively at the stove. It was not the first time he had been called upon to settle matrimonial difficulties; he had the reputation of a local Solomon to maintain.

"He used to be free with his money before I went to live with him," the girl continued. "Then there was parties, and dances, and taxies, with never a squeal outer him. But now? Why, it's just wash and cook and scrub up after him, with a beatin' thrown in for luck, like I was no more than a nigger slave! I've had enough! I'm through!"

"What do you mean, you're through, kid?"

"I mean just that, Billy. I've quit. Me and a girl pal have a room on Fourteenth Street. I was headed there to-night when I seen him followin' me."

"YOU'LL go back, kid," the Solomon of Third Avenue said after some moments of deliberation. "There's just two kinds of skirts I know—the kind that likes kisses and the kind that likes kicks; the kind that's sweet on nice, quiet boys and the kind that hankers for gorillas. You belong in the second class, kid; and that's why I'm bettin' you'll go back."

"Honest to Gawd, I won't!" she wailed, while again mascaro-tinted tears trickled down her cheeks. "He's got me scared stiff with his knife and all! I don't want ever to see him again! Oh, if he'd only leave me alone!"

"You say he's been followin' you?"

"Sure—ever since I got outer the factory. He never came up and spoke. No, he just sneaked along behind. And whenever I looked back, he tapped the pocket where he keeps that knife. Fireman Joe was with me; but, when he seen him, he got scared and beat it."

"What's your idea in comin' *here*, kid?"

"I was passin' and thought that maybe you'd help me out, Billy." She paused and cast an imploring glance, not at the bootlegger but at Micky, who at that moment had turned toward her. "I want to get home safe to Fourteenth Street. Now if one of you was along with me, he wouldn't dare do anythin'."

"Call a cop," Billy said unfeelingly. "I don't want to get mixed up in your quarrels."

"Call a cop!" she repeated scornfully. "Think I'd do that, Billy? No, I'd sooner call the undertaker to have him make me look natural. Call a cop!—I'm askin' you!"

Evidently the girl's contempt for such a solution of her difficulties was well grounded in local ethics. Billy seemed a trifle conscience-stricken that he had offered such advice. He muttered that she was only a "skirt" and that a "skirt" could do almost anything and be forgiven—even call a cop if her life were in imminent danger. But it was at this point that Micky offered his services.

"I'll step around with you, kid," he said, pulling the peak of his cap down over his eyes and buttoning his overcoat under his square-cut chin. "I won't be long, Billy."

"Gee—that's the stuff!" the girl cried.

"Aw, forget that!" he said bruskly. "Come along, kid."

They went out together—he with the swift, tigerish grace that marked all his movements; she, awkwardly, jerkily, dabbing at her discolored cheeks with a wrinkled handkerchief splotched with rouge and redolent of cheap perfume.

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"We was talkin' about the fightin' game before she came in," Billy said with a reminiscent smile. "I was sayin' that none of the battlers to-day takes chances. They want big money down or they don't put on the gloves. But there's a exception to every rule; and you seen him to-night, Mr. Overton."

"I saw the exception?"

"Sure, Micky Rorke—him with the broken hands and the broken heart. There's a fighter who was a fighter! Only two years ago he was the pride of Third Avenue. And now? Why, he ain't nothing now and never will be again. Would you like to hear his story, Mr. Overton?"

I signified my eagerness to hear it; and Billy, after refilling our glasses, began as follows:

"Micky was born and bred in this neighborhood. He comes of good old Irish stock on both sides. His pop was one of them guys you see balancin' themselves a hundred feet up in the air on a steel girder which maybe ain't as broad as your hand. Well, one day old man Rorke's foot slipped and they had to pick up what was left of him in a wheelbarrow.

"It was about this time that I first seen Micky. Widow Rorke had to take him out of school—she with another kid comin' and with no money in the house—and Micky had got himself a shoe-shinin' outfit. Each mornin' and evenin', no matter what kind of weather, he'd be stationed somewheres on the street, givin' us sports a polishin' off.

"And a shine on the shoes wasn't the only shine he passed out, neither. No, sir! He wasn't taller than the first button on your vest there; but, Gawd Almighty, he was a holy terror to the kids on Third Avenue! He licked niggers and Swedes and wops and Irish—some of 'em twenty pounds heavier and a half a foot higher—kids that you'd think could put Micky in their pockets and walk away with him.

"Well, his fightin' got my goat—for I couldn't make out where he packed the wallop to knock some of them big lads groggy. I used to stand and watch him sailin' in, swingin' them skinny arms about as wild seemingly as a windmill and yet landin' nearly every blow he struck, till it got me dizzy.

"'What's this?' I'd ask myself. 'Is this kid here another Stanley Ketchell—one of them born fighters that can land with both hands from any position—one of them phenoms that pop up once in a man's lifetime?'

"Bein' interested in the fight game and this here kid, I got the idea of fixin' up the cellar under my place as a sportin' club where the boys could settle their differences with the mitts, 'stead of scrappin' out in the open street. I rigged up a ring an' all, and passed the word to Micky and some of the other kids. Pretty soon not a day went by when there wasn't a first-class scrap goin' on down below, with seconds and a timer and a referee and a crowd of the boys to look on—all regular and aboveboard.

"Now Micky Rorke went on cleanin' up the other kids in my cellar just the same as he used to do out on Third Avenue—only it pleased him a lot more to have the mitts and the other trimmin's thrown in. He didn't fight 'cause he was crossgrained and ugly-natured. No, sir, there never was a sweeter tempered fighter than him. He fought 'cause he couldn't help it, 'cause he was made to fight—and he fought with a smile on his lips and a laugh in his throat. I only seen him roarin' mad once in my life—but that's gettin' too far ahead with the yarn.

"By the time Micky was sixteen there wasn't a kid on the avenue that would put on the mitts with him; and so we sent him over to the Reindeer Atheletic Club what staged amachure bouts every Saturday night. He stripped most like he does now, only he wasn't so broad across the shoulders—he was just a tall, slim kid with a easy way about him like he was whittled all out of one piece.

"WELL, it was just the same story at the atheletic club as it was on Third Avenue. He gave them amachures hell. He didn't fight like any other guy them sluggers had ever seen. Some of 'em had been coached pretty enough how to hold up their mitts. They kinder thought that a proper pug pranced around a bit, leadin' with his left till he seen a openin' for a haymaker with his right. But Micky wasn't proper when it come to fightin'. He was just naturally made for knocking 'em cold.

There wasn't no set rules of the game he followed. He was like one of them

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whirlin' dervishes in the circus. I've seen him jump up into the air and take a wild swing, and seen the other guy drop before he touched the floor again; I've seen him twirl around on his toes, like a top, and knock a gink for a couple of loops; and I've seen the other poor boob go to sleep without ever bein' able to pick out the punch that polished him off.

"Every Saturday night he come home with a ring or a watch he'd won at the club for Widow Rorke, who was dead against his fightin' except for the grand things she got out of it. Now, it's only natural that a fine, upstanding lad, like Micky, should have a girl of his own; and so pretty soon he began walkin' out nights with Maggie Sweeney.

"MAGGIE, in them days, was as neat a skirt as you'd want to see. Fluffy she was as the doll you'd buy for your kid—the gigglin' kind, with pearly white teeth to show for it and cheeks red as roses—a little devil with a rovin' blue eye who needed a man's strong hand on her bridle—the snugglin' kind and the pettin' kind, the kind to make a tightwad snap off the rubber 'round his greenbacks. Pretty soon *she* was gettin' the rings and watches; while old Widow Rorke was squawkin' to the neighbors about the disgrace of prize-fightin' and them nasty flappers what leads our boys astray.

"But none of us on Third Avenue bothered much about Widow Rorke. We men was proud of Micky's fightin'. And as for the women: why, when they caught sight of Maggie and Micky on a Saturday afternoon, all dressed in their best—she holdin' to his right arm kinder proud; and he lookin' down at her like she was a tenderloin steak and him starvin' that minute—they'd turn away with a tear in their eye, thinkin' of the days when *they'd* been walkin' out with some of us old sports, or figurin' maybe on the fine kids these two would be havin' once they got hitched.

"Now you'd think, Mr. Overton, with all the fights Micky had won at the club, that he'd be a bit chesty over himself—maybe bossin' it over the other boys on the avenue, or havin' a sharp word for his elders. But not him. Humble and retiring, that was Micky—always ready to take advice for what it was worth and thankful to a friend that wished him well. Him and me had always been as close as two fingers on the same hand. It was only right that he should come here to talk things over with me on the night when he got the grand offer from Battlin' Flynn.

" 'Billy,' says he, calm as a priest, 'Battlin' Flynn was down to see me fight, and he's give me a offer. He says I'm wastin' my time with them amachures at the club. He tells me that I've got the stuff in me to make good as a pro.'

"Micky told me all about it, Mr. Overton. He said that Battlin' Flynn was trainin' Whaleboat Jones for a twenty-round go with Nigger Salem in Cuba and that he was lookin' around for a couple of sparrin' partners for Whaleboat to take along. If Micky would go, he'd have all his expenses paid, twenty bucks a week, and a chance to pull off some fightin' in the preliminaries.

"Well, it looked mighty good to me, and I told the kid as much. 'If you're goin' to be a regular pug,' I says, 'you might as well go to it right away. I know Battlin' Flynn, and there ain't a better trainer anywheres. If that guy is willin' to take you, it means you got a future.'

"But Micky was kinder doubtful. He'd sprung the big idea on his ma and Maggie, and neither of them two dames had took to it. Widow Rorke had pretty near cried her eyes out, tellin' him that she'd have strangled him in his cradle if she'd thought she was raisin' her boy to be a plug-ugly; and Maggie tosses her pretty head and pouts and says that he can't think much of her if he's willin' to leave her and go and live in foreign parts. Between the two of 'em, those women had the poor kid uncertain in his mind.

" 'That's like women,' I says. 'They can't see no further ahead of 'em than their own noses. Wait till you're bringin' home the kale in hundred-dollar bills, 'stead of nickels. By the time you're doing that, they'll both talk different.'

" 'Then you think I should sign up with Flynn?' he asks very serious.

" 'Sure,' I tells him. 'This here is a golden opportunity.'

" 'But there's one other thing that I ain't ever told you, Billy,' he says, pullin' his hands outer his pockets and lookin' at 'em kinder sad. 'These mitts of mine ain't worth a damn.'

" 'Ain't worth a damn!' I repeats. 'What

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do you mean they ain't worth a damn? Ain't they put the fear of you into the heart of every kid on Third Avenue, and ain't they knocked the blocks off the boys at the club?'

" 'Maybe,' he assents in that modest way he's got. 'But they ain't no good, just the same. They're most as small as a woman's, and they can't stand the steam I put into punches. I broke the left twice and the right once already; if I ain't careful, they won't be nothin' more than mush in a year or so.'

" 'THAT'S the trouble with this here amachure stuff!' I broke in. 'You don't get looked after right. Now Battlin' Flynn wouldn't take no chances with your hands. He'd have 'em bandaged before the bout, and he'd have a doc give 'em the once-over if they hurt. When you're a pro, kid, your trainer does the worryin'.'

"Well, to make it snappy, Micky took my advice and sailed to Cuba. It wasn't long before Flynn signed him up for his first bout, and the kid won it with a good old K. O., in the second round. From then on he was knockin' out them Cuban boys regular, when he wasn't givin' Whaleboat Jones more sparrin' practise than he wanted down at the champ's trainin' quarters. He didn't want to hand me all this good news himself, bein' kinder modest, so one day he gets Battlin' Flynn to take up pen and paper and give me the dope. I still got that letter. Would you like to see it, Mr. Overton?"

I nodded, and Billy drew out a capacious wallet fairly bursting with bills of various denominations. Rummaging through his treasures, he at last brought to light a wrinkled sheet of paper and handed it to me. I smoothed the folds out on my knee and then read:

FRIEND BILLY:

Micky has asked me to send you the dope about him. So here goes.

The kid is a world beater. So far he has knocked out six of these local boys and none of them lasted more than three rounds. Outside of Stanley Ketchell, I never saw any one who was such a born battler. You know what a big skate Whaleboat is? Well, Micky had him so groggy yesterday afternoon that I had to call him off.

Now here's a promise, Billy, that I make you and the world at large. If the kid's hands last out, I'll have him champion lightweight of the world before he's two years older.

Hoping that this finds you in the best of health and that the cops aren't riding you too hard,

I am,

Your servant to command,

JAMES FLYNN.

"Did you get what the 'Battler' says about Micky's hands?" Billy asked after I had folded up the letter and returned it to him. "Well, you see the kid was right—them mitts of his was his weak point. But we'll forget about them now, for I have a word to say about Maggie.

"I didn't see her for most a month after Micky sailed, Mr. Overton. But one Sunday evening, when I was takin' a breather in the park, I ran into her walkin' out with another young feller. It give me a start—especial when I seen what guy it was had his arm 'round her waist.

"It was a young wop named Tony Martino who does a little bootleggin' of his own over his pop's grocery store—a flashy young feller with diamond rings on his fingers, a suit of clothes you could play checkers on if you didn't burn your fingers first, and one of them yellow faces with black, overgrown eyes what the skirts thinks is so romantic.

"Well, when Maggie catches sight of me, she throws off that wop's arm like it was a snake that was goin' to bite her and away she goes down a side path. Pretty soon I can't see 'em any more.

" 'SURE,' I says to myself, 'there's a wop that's goin' to be knocked for a couple of loops when Micky gets home again. And he deserves all that's comin' to him—not only for foolin' around with another guy's skirt, but also for sellin' that pink prussic acid which he has the nerve to call fine, old claret wine. I think I'll be writin' a letter to Micky and put him wise,' I says to myself.

"But I never had a chance to write the kid, for the very next mornin' Maggie drops into my place lookin' so pure and sweet that lard wouldn't melt in her mouth. She was all togged out in swell clothes what smelt of violets.

" 'Mr. Conklin, I believe,' she purrs. 'Ain't you a friend of Micky's?'

"I owned up mighty proud that I was and said that I had seen her walkin' out with him—only I thought she'd had dark brown hair then.

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" 'Oh, no, Mr. Conklin,' she says, givin' her curls a shake. Mr. Overton, they looked like the shavin's in Bert Williams' carpenter shop. 'Oh, no, Mr. Conklin,' she says, 'I'm a blonde.'

" 'So I see,' I replies, givin' her the once-over. 'Does Micky know that yet?'

" 'I came about Micky,' she says, as though I had never opened my trap. 'We're engaged. I knew you were a friend of his and I didn't want you to get the wrong idea when you seen me out there in the park last night. Mr. Martino and me are just friends.

" 'You seemed pretty close friends,' I remarked, rememberin' the strangle hold he had 'round her waist.

" 'We went to school together,' she says, givin' me a baby stare. 'Him and Micky are good friends, too.'

" 'I only seen them together once,' I put in. 'They looked then like they was even closer friends than you and him. Micky had the wop down and was knockin' his greasy head on the sidewalk.'

" 'Boys will be boys,' she says, with a coy look at a bottle of Madeira on the table. 'If they met now——'

" 'They wouldn't meet now,' I broke in. 'Martino would take good care of that.'

" 'I came here to ask you not to make Micky jealous of me, Mr. Conklin,' she says, her pretty blue eyes gettin' all misty. 'I'm too young to sit around all the time. Pretty soon Micky and me will be married; and I can't see no reason why I shouldn't go out occasional with a boy friend while he's away.'

"Well, I couldn't say anythin' against that—though I didn't like the looks of that wop, nor the sly way she slipped his arm off her waist—so I made her mind easy that I wouldn't spill the beans to Micky. Pretty soon she went out of my place with the bottle of Madeira tucked under her arm, which I give her as a present for her sick aunt. Since then I learned that her sick aunt had died two years before I give her that bottle. Maggie was some fox, Mr. Overton.

"I DIDN'T see her again for some time, though I heard plenty about her. It seems that she and this Martino was keepin' steady company. It was said as how he was showin' her a good time with the kale his pink ink was bringin' him in and folks told me that the pair of 'em was hittin' a pretty lively pace.

"Now I'm no Mother Grundy, nor none of them joy-killers what the papers talk about, but I'd pretty near made up my mind to write Micky about how his skirt was carryin' on, when one night Maggie drops in on me with as pretty a black eye as you ever seen. It kinder give me a start to see that classy kid with a right lamp what would have done credit to Dempsey, so I puts her through the third degree.

"She stalls around a bit at first, but finally she comes across with the straight dope. It seems that this Martino and she had had a battle and that the wop had put her eye in mournin' as a partin' keepsake. It sure was a beauty and I told her so.

" 'But I'm through with him now, Billy,' she wails. 'No guy can beat me up and get away with it! Besides, Micky's comin' home next week.'

" 'Oh, is he?' I says, rather stern. 'And what are you goin' to tell him about your wop friend?'

" 'Nothin',' she answers, and gives me a scared look. 'And you won't, neither, Billy.'

" 'Oh, won't I?' I replied rather short. 'And why won't I, kid? Micky's a pal of mine, and I ain't the guy to let a pal get hooked up to a double-crossin' skirt so long as I got a tongue in my head.'

"Well, then, Mr. Overton, Maggie pulls the sob stuff: She was only a kid, wasn't she? She didn't know nothin' about life. Micky was so clean and decent, she'd thought other guys was the same. There wasn't nothin' between her and the wop—nothin' at all! She'd just let him take her out to the movin' pictures and a dance or two, bein' so lonely without Micky and thinkin' no harm of anybody. But last night, she told me, she'd finally had her eyes opened.

" 'You've got one of 'em pretty well closed now, kid,' I breaks in sarcastic, though I'm beginnin' to warm up considerable to the sob stuff. 'How did you get it—honest now, kid?'

" 'I got it protectin' my honor,' she says mighty proud, sticking up her chin in the air. 'Mr. Martino proved unworthy of my trust. Thank Gawd, I escaped before he could work his will on me.'

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"Well, she said a lot more, Mr. Overton. All in all it was most as heart-squeezin' as anythin' I ever listened to. Before she quit, I was a bit husky in the throat and dim in the eyes. There and then I promise her not to spill the beans to Micky, and I give her another bottle of wine for her dead-sick aunt, and I take her around to Frank's drug-store and buy her one of them black, squirmy worms for her eye.

"I didn't see anythin' more of Maggie till Micky blew in with her two weeks later. The boy was lookin' fine, and he moved like a race-horse comin' out on the track.

"Well, we shook hands like buddies, while Maggie clung to his other arm like she was scared I might give him an earful. Then we sat down together and he told me the news.

"It seems that the Battler's got him signed up for a bout with Lefty Lynch at the Garden. There's a thousand for him if he wins it. Lynch is a good boy with a rep; if Micky polishes him off, the Battler tells him, there ain't no reason why he can't be tappin' at the top-notchers next trip.

ALL this is good news to me, and I forget about Maggie and everythin' but the fight game. But Micky can't keep the skirt out of his mind. His every second word is for her, and his every glance, and most of his smiles.

" 'What have you done to my girl?' he says at last. 'I leave her a brunette, and I find her a blonde.'

" 'Don't you like me this way, sweetheart?' she gurgles, rubbin' up against him like a starvin' cat. 'I thought it would please you.'

" 'Sure,' he says with a shamefaced grin at me. 'You're some class, kid.'

" 'She was changin' the color of her eyes, too,' I couldn't help remarkin'. 'One lamp at a time.'

" 'The color of her eyes?' Micky says, kinder puzzled. 'What do you mean by that, Billy?'

"But before I could answer, Maggie cuts in as sharp as a knife.

'That's just one of his jokes, big boy,' she says, kinder nervous. 'He seen me put mascaro in one of 'em.'

"I turned away with a grin to fetch them a bottle of wine. But Micky wouldn't have none of it. He's in trainin' already for Lefty Lynch and lets on that it's time he hit the hay.

"At that Maggie pulls a sour face and says that she ain't used to goin' home at nine P.M. What she wants is to stay and lap up some booze.

" 'But I'm in trainin', dear,' he says, as gentle as a lamb. 'Battlin' Flynn told me to——"

" 'Who's Battlin' Flynn that he should spoil our fun?' she breaks in, stampin' her foot. 'If prize-fighters all have to live like you, Micky, I don't want none of 'em as husbands.'

"The boy's kinder taken aback by this and gives me a puzzled look. So I think it's time I put in a word or two.

" 'There ain't every skirt is lucky enough to get a first-rate mitt-artist, kid,' I tell her. 'They're the guys that make real coin—not like them greasy wops what peddles pink ink on Sixth Avenue.'

"I had spoke to show her her place. All sob stuff aside, I wasn't near as easy as Micky. She didn't come back for more. Pretty soon she trots off quiet with the boy."

"How did Micky's fight come out?" I asked. "Did he beat Lefty Lynch?"

"He sure did, Mr. Overton; and I was in a ringside seat that night. You never seen anythin' like the kid. He was here, there and everywheres. Lightnin' had nothin' on him. Lefty Lynch is a rugged boy, fine boxer and all; but there was nothin' made to stop Micky when Maggie and me were lookin' on.

"From the start Lefty was shakin' his head like he was puzzled. And no wonder, too; for the kid was like he was in the old athletic club days, only more so. Hookin', uppercuttin', jabbin' with either hand, he could land them all, in position or out of it, up in the air or in a crouch, flat-footed or whirlin' about on his toes. Never had I seen anythin' like it before; and I guess Lefty hadn't, neither, from the dumb look on his face.

"Well, Micky kept on pilin' up the points like he was goin' to finish his man in the first round; when, all of a sudden, one of his right hooks landed too high on Lefty's head and I seen the kid's mouth twitch down at the corners. He'd broke his right hand.

"Now what would most boys do, Mr. Overton? Would they quit, or wouldn't they?"

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"They'd quit," I replied. "Didn't Micky?"

"He did not!" Billy cried triumphantly. "Not Micky Rorke from Third Avenue! No, sir, he just sailed into Lynch with his left hand—yes, went sailin' in with his jaw set hard and knocked Lefty cold in the second!"

"KNOCKED him out with his left?" I asked in genuine amazement.

"Yes, sir. Broke Lynch's jaw and broke his other hand as he did it. That wallop was a haymaker, all right. You should have heard the crowd shout, Mr. Overton! And Micky? Well, he just grinned and bobbed his head; but I seen the twitch of pain to his lips.

"Hard luck? I'll tell the world! Both hands smashed in one fight—hands that he couldn't be usin' for months—and Micky just startin' in New York with the top-notchers all before him.

"Battlin' Flynn was some gloomy Gus when he takes a look at Micky's hands—though he give the kid due credit for puttin' up the fight he did—and he sent right off for a bone-setter. They was bad breaks, both of 'em; and the doc says Micky shouldn't use his mitts again for three months. He bandaged 'em up and sent the kid home just about as happy as a cripple.

"Micky told me later that he and Maggie had planned to get spliced that month but that his busted hands had delivered the good old K. O. to their intentions. The kid hadn't saved anythin' on the Cuba trip; here he was, with only a thousand, out of a job, and with a couple of mitts that were no more good to him than a blind man's eyelids! Mighty tough luck; wasn't it, Mr. Overton?

"And Micky's women folks didn't make things any easier for the kid. Old Widow Rorke laid into him with her tongue continual; and as for Maggie—well, she kept company with him wearin' a sour face 'cause he couldn't afford to spend much money on her.

"One night, two weeks after the bout in the Garden, Maggie and Micky dropped in here. I opened a bottle of wine, thinkin' that maybe a couple of drinks might make him see things brighter. But they don't seem to have much effect on the boy.

"That night he sat in the corner where you're sittin' now, Mr. Overton, with his cap pulled down over his eyes and his bandaged hands restin' on his knees, like one of them professional mourners the kikes hire to give their funerals a good send-off. But the booze spruced Maggie up considerable. Pretty soon she began to giggle and tell me what a fine feller I am—as though any skirt could pull that stuff with me.

"All at once I hear a loud knock; and when I opens the door, who do I see but that wop, Martino, and three other gorillas with 'im. In he comes with that flashy way he's got, showin' his big white teeth in a nasty smile and givin' Micky's bandaged hands the once-over.

"I smell trouble in the wind and I ask Martino and his gang what they want. Maggie has quit her gigglin' and now she's starin' at the wop, goggle-eyed. Micky ain't payin' much attention—just sittin' there, quiet and doleful, with his broken fists restin' on his knees.

" 'I don't want none of your poisoned booze, Billy Conklin,' Martino says very contemptuous. 'I've come here to get my woman.' He steps forward and lays his hand on Maggie's shoulder. 'This skirt's my woman,' he says, lookin' straight at Micky, 'and she's goin' home with me.'

"At that Micky jumps to his feet. I can see that all this is news to him. Nobody had put him wise about Maggie and the wop walkin' out together.

" 'She's your *what?*' he stammers, like a kid just learnin' to talk.

" 'She's *my* woman,' Martino repeats, still with that ugly grin on his yellow mug. 'We've been keepin' company for months, feller, and no second-rate pug is goin' to bust it up. Come along, Maggie!'

"WELL, Mr. Overton, I seen Micky's face go so white that the freckles stood out on it like specks of mud and I seen his two bandaged hands risin' up into position.

" 'Take it easy, kid!' I says, steppin' in between him and Martino. 'For Gawd's sake, take it easy! You know what the doc told you! Them hands of yours——'

" 'To hell with my hands!' he says between his teeth. 'Maggie, tell this wop where he gets off before I crown him! Maggie, for Gawd's sake, tell him that he lies!'

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"But Maggie didn't have no come-back. She just sits there, like a doll in old Cohen's toy shop, and stares at the wop. As for Martino—he hadn't expected no fight talk out of Micky and he looked some surprised. But another squint at the kid's bandaged hands puts heart in him. He gets a grip on Maggie's arm and begins haulin' her to her feet.

" 'You come along with me, kid,' he says kinder rough, 'or I'll give you another blue eye! Don't let this feller throw a scare into you!'

"And then somethin' happens quick. Before me or them gorilla pals of Martino's can move a finger, Micky's at the wop and them two are millin' it all over the place. It's a couple of minutes before we can drag 'em apart. And as for Maggie—why, she's playin' possum on the floor, with her face hid in her hands.

" 'This ain't no place to stage a battle!' I says, gettin' a strangle hold about the kid's neck. 'There ain't no room and there's too many bottles of booze waitin' to be knocked over.'

" 'All right, Billy,' he tells me as cold as ice. 'We'll go down to the cellar.'

" 'But you can't fight with them busted hands!' I puts in very determined. 'It's goin' contrary to the doc's orders.'

" 'To hell with the doc!' he says very low, with his eyes all the time on Martino, who's bein' held back by a couple of his pals.

" 'That's right, Billy,' says one of the gorillas who I can see is just itchin' to see a fight. 'There's goin' to be a battle between these two guys sure; so you might just as well lend us the cellar so's we can run it off where there won't be no chance of the cops buttin' in.'

"Well, Gawd knows, Mr. Overton, I didn't want to see Micky fight with them busted hands! But what was I to do? I was only one old guy against five young ones; and it was even money that them pals of Martino's was totin' gats and knives. So I told them they could use the cellar and stood aside.

" 'You ain't turnin' me down, Billy?' Micky says in my ear. 'I want a friend along so's I gets a square deal. I don't trust these wops.'

"I nods my head and pats his shoulder to hearten him up; and then all of us troops down to the cellar, with Maggie taggin' along behind and tryin' to look like one of them movin'-picture queens what's bein' fought over.

"Well, as I told you, Mr. Overton, I'd had that cellar fixed up years ago so that the kids off the street could battle in it. There was a regulation-sized ring roped off in the center, a couple of stools for the fighters to rest on between the rounds, and one of them big electric bulbs hanging from the ceilin'.

"ME AND the gorillas got together and framed up the fight. Micky and Martino was to have a three-minute round battle to a finish without the mitts. One of the gorillas was made time keeper; another, referee; the third was in Martino's corner and I was in Micky's. Next we filled up a couple of buckets with water and I sneaked two towels off old woman Gafney's clothesline in the back yard. Then the wop and Micky stripped to the waist and we was all set.

" 'For Gawd's sake, Micky,' I whisper in my man's ear as we was waitin' for the bell, 'if them hands of yours start goin', just you give me the high sign and I'll stop this fight! No skirt's worth it, Micky!'

"But he only grins up at me—maybe you've seen that kid's grin he's got—and shakes his head. 'They won't go back on me to-night,' he says, lookin' at his mitts kinder hard. 'I won't let 'em go back on me!'

"Outer the corner of my eye I see Maggie sittin' on a bench alongside the ring. She's red in the face and her eyes are sparklin' like diamonds. An ugly word for her rises up in my throat and I choke it down again. But pretty soon I ain't thinkin' of Maggie, or anythin', for the gorilla with the watch yells 'Time!'

"Now I'm tellin' you, Mr. Overton, it's a man's-sized job to lick this Martino even when a guy's got good hands. He's half a head taller than Micky and he strips like 'Strangle' Lewis—a great barrel-chest on him, with black hair sproutin' on it most as thick as summer grass; arms as big around as your thighs and muscled pretty; and a way of standin' on his legs like they was marble pillars. A husky wop, and no mistake!

"But that didn't bother Micky none. The kid was mad clean through—not hot

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mad, but cold mad—the kind of mad that counts with fighters—the kind that lets a guy go on thinkin', but puts steam in his punches.

"Do you know what it's like to battle with two busted hands, Mr. Overton? I can tell you it's hell! Is there any other fighter, alive or dead, what wouldn't have pulled his punches with two busted hands? Is there any other fighter that could have helped pullin' his punches? Now, I'm askin' you, Mr. Overton!

"Well, Micky didn't! I'll bet my bottom dollar on that! Martino was too tough a guy. A wallop that didn't land square with lots of steam behind it couldn't make that wop take the count.

"It went ten rounds, Mr. Overton; and, between each round, I'd beg Micky to let me throw up the sponge. But he'd only shake his head.

" 'Not yet, Billy,' he'd whisper, 'not yet. The mitts are lastin' fine.'

"But they wasn't, Mr. Overton. They was smashed to a pulp on the wop's granite jaw. Pretty soon the bandages, coverin' 'em, was soaked with blood; and every time them poor, sufferin' things landed on Martino, they left a red mark. Toward the last they looked like the pink sponges you see in Frank's drug-store."

"They knocked out Martino?" I broke in. "They knocked out the wop?"

"THEY sure did," Billy said slowly. "Micky polished him off in the tenth round. But you should have seen that last wallop, Mr. Overton—that right uppercut! It would have knocked Dempsey off his feet! It caught the wop under the chin and dropped him for the count. Them pals of his worked on him most an hour before they could bring him to. It was some K. O.!"

Billy broke off and stared reflectively at his shoes. For a long moment there was silence.

"So Micky won the girl at a price?" I said at length.

Billy slowly raised his head. On his dark face and in his kindly eyes, there was a trace of cynical amusement. The Solomon of Third Avenue was in one of his philosophic moods.

"Can the happy endin' stuff, Mr. Overton!" he said genially. "Things don't happen that way down here."

"But Micky?" I persisted.

"Sure, he paid the price all right—his hands was past mendin' this time—but he *didn't* win the girl. No sooner does she see Martino on his back than she turns on Micky like a wildcat.

" 'You brute, you've killed him!' she screams; and then what does she do but crawl through the ropes and throw herself on the wop's chest.

"Tough on Micky? I'll tell the world! It was most a knockout for the poor kid. His face got white as death and his underlip began to wabble and he looked at Maggie like he couldn't believe his eyes.

" 'WHAT Martino said was all true, then,' he says kinder low, swayin' on his feet, '—all true!'

" 'Come out of this!' I yells, grabbin' him by the arm, for I can see that the next minute he's goin' to hit the floor. 'Come along, kid! What you want's a drink!'

"Well, I managed to get him upstairs and a drink inside of him. But it didn't do much good, 'cause he passed out anyhow. There he sat, with his head resting on this table and his hands hangin' useless by his sides—them hands that looked like the pink sponges in Frank's drug-store. Poor kid!—he was done as a fighter! Him, who might have been the lightweight champion of the world, was licked by a skirt!"

"I wish I could have seen Maggie," I said.

"You saw her to-night, Mr. Overton. She was the girl Micky took home."

For an instant I once more seemed to see the gum-chewing, peroxide blonde, with her mascaro-tinted tears and thick ankles—that blonde who had told a tale of matrimonial troubles. Was it possible that *she* had been the one for whom Micky had sacrificed his all?

"That drab?" I cried in amazement.

"Sure, that drab," Billy assented. "But Maggie was a good-looker before she took up with Martino. Them kind, when they hits the shoot-the-chutes, travels fast."

"Poor Micky!" I muttered.

"He got a raw deal, sure enough," Billy said thoughtfully. "All of which goes to prove that maybe these high-priced fighters of to-day have the right dope, spite of what I said about 'em when you first blew in. It pays a guy to know what he's fightin' for when he steps into the ring."

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The Amazing Redemption of a Derelict

Mellowing Money

Archer Finds Himself in the Extraordinary Position of Being President of a Bank the Safe of Which He Lately Blew

By Francis Lynde

Author of "The Real Man," "The Wreckers," "Pirates' Hope," etc.

Illustrations by J. M. Clement

Begin this serial with any instalment. The story is here up to this issue.

IN THE editorial sanctum of the Bethsaida *Telegraph*, a storm of curious cries greeted Macallaster's revelation. The editor was triumphant.

"You mean," cried one of his hearers, "that there's a chance to settle Archer Griffith?"

"Why not? Look at what we know. He's no good—never was any good. They say he did well in the war, but half the bums in the country have been getting by on a good war record since the armistice. John Kingsley got him out of jail when he was held for vagrancy—fixed up that burglary business, too—though he's still got that hanging over him.

"Now—we know what we know. He did help old Amos Whittlesea out when those fellows were trying to get the combination of the safe out of him—but he had blown the safe already himself. If we can prove that, we've got him. We won't need to care about his being old Amos's heir. As it stands, every one of us is in his power—in the power of a man who has reason to hate us all—a man who knows what we've always thought of him.

"I say it's up to us to find the man who was in the car and saw what really happened in the bank that night. We can't call our souls our own until we get this thing straight."

The others were in accord with him. They hated and feared Griffith as men always do hate and fear one whom they have abused. They had no great reason to like Macallaster, but he was one of them—and they did not know all that was to be known of him. When he asked them to guarantee a share of the expense of securing evidence against Archer Griffith, they agreed—not with enthusiasm, perhaps, but with the feeling of men having no alternative.

And yet, the man against whom they felt obliged to combine was as dazed as they, nothing in the amazing years he had lived, which had seen him fall from affluence in this very town to the estate of a tramp, which had brought him back into Margery Stillwell's life after he had believed that she belonged to his friend, John Kingsley, had been so incredible, so devastating, as the news that Amos Whittlesea had made him his heir.

It was true, as Macallaster had told the others, that he and not the worthless young burglars, Harriford and Jefferson, had

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robbed the bank. He had blown the safe — to get the note old Amos held of Kingsley's, the calling of which would have ruined Kingsley. And the old usurer had known that —known it as well as he had known that Griffith had saved him when the two amateurs had been burning the soles of his feet. Yet he had made Griffith his heir!

FOR three days after Griffith's single visit to the bank in his new capacity of owner, Bethsaida walked softly, nerving itself for what might befall. During this interval anxious curiosity, personified by sundry worried debtors, hung over the railing beside old Peter Larkin's new desk in the cashier's space trying to extract information. But the gentle-voiced old man with the winter-apple face, smilingly cordial to all, proved safely pump-proof when they got beyond the business commonplaces. No, Mr. Griffith wasn't down yet. Yes, perhaps he would be down in the afternoon, but there was nothing certain about it. Your note? Oh, yes; we'll renew that for another thirty days. Glad to oblige you, Mr. ——, Smith, Brown or Jones, as it might happen to be.

Thus the old cashier; and when that source of information refused to drip anything alleviating, Pott, as chairman of the committee of anxious ones, fell upon John Kingsley. But this source also ran dry at the first tapping.

"Don't ask me," laughed the young ironmaster. "What I don't know about Archer's intentions would fill a book a lot bigger than your hardware catalogue."

"But what is he doing? And what does he know about banking, anyway?" roared the hardware merchant, in the famous Pott whisper.

"You can search me. All that I can tell you is that he has finished Fielding's 'Tom Jones,' and has begun on his 'Jonathan Wild,'" which, since he had never even so much as heard of Fielding or his two immortal novels, meant nothing to Pott.

"But look here, John—he ought to let us know what we're to expect. This town's gone slap up into the air; and not only the town, but the country buyers, too. I can't sell a blame' piece of farm machinery —not one; the trade's dead. Four farmers out of every five are owing the bank, and they just throw up their hands and say they can't turn a wheel until they know what the bank's going to do to 'em."

Kingsley's shoulders went up. "I can't tell you anything at all, Pott. Archer is my house guest, and I'm trying not to pry into his inner consciousness any more than I can help. The one thing I know is that he didn't want Amos Whittlesea's money; had no more idea that it was going to be left to him than you had. What he is going to do with it is more than I can tell."

Pott bored the futile information source with a baffled eye.

"John, I was a pretty good friend of your father's, and I'm going to talk straight to you. Do you know what the town's saying about you and Arch Griffith?"

"I know some of the things; yes."

"But not all of 'em, I don't think. You owed the bank a lot of money, didn't you?"

"I did; and I still do."

"But on the night when the vault was busted open your note and security—whatever it was—turned up missing. Ain't that so?"

"It is."

"Well, folks will talk, you know. Arch Griffith was tried once for being mixed up in a burglary—everybody knows that—and it was one of your electric drills that was used by whoever it was that dynamited the bank vault. I guess I needn't make it any plainer."

"No, you needn't," said Kingsley curtly. "But you haven't got the whole story. You may tell your damned gossips, whoever they are, that I have since replaced the missing note with a duplicate, secured precisely in the same way the original was secured. Not that it's any of their business, or yours, for that matter."

"Oh!" said Pott, and with that he took his leave.

KINGSLEY'S account of Griffith's activities, or rather his total lack of activities, during the three-day interval was strictly accurate. When he was not lounging in the garden watching Uncle Ephraim potter over the growing vegetables, he was either in his room or in the cooler library immersed, apparently to the exclusion of everything else, in one or another of the old books. To be sure, there were comradely talks with Kingsley in the evening tobacco sessions, but in these there was no mention

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"Have you forgiven me for what I did the other day, Margery—out on the Walnut Grove road?"

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made of the late astounding change in the derelict's state and standing. Griffith never by any chance adverted to it; and Kingsley, without knowing exactly why he did it, respected Griffith's reticence, telling himself that, in his own good time, Griffith would reopen the subject if he had anything to say.

It was on the third evening, shortly after the smoking of the first pipe on the vine-shaded porch, that the house guest excused himself rather abruptly, with the remark that he was going for a walk. Though there had been nothing in particular in Griffith's manner, either at the dinner-table or later, to indicate it, Kingsley had a vague feeling that a crisis of some sort was impending, and his first impulse was to offer to go along. But upon second thought he refrained. Without having anything more than Griffith's resolute isolation and reticence upon which to base the assumption, the young ironmaster felt that Griffith was fighting a shrewd battle, either with himself or with the powers of darkness, and he was enough of a man's man to know that such battles are best fought out alone.

Judged from the point of view of an onlooker, Griffith's movements, after he left the house at the head of Maple Avenue, gave some little corroborative color to Kingsley's surmisings. Strolling aimlessly down the main thoroughfare with his pipe locked between his teeth and his hands behind him, he paused only once, and that was to stare absently up the box-bordered path that led from the sidewalk up to the house where he had been born.

Wrenching himself away, as with an effort, he passed on down the avenue, slowing up again as he approached the corner where the click of the pool balls in Gaffney's place could be heard. Twice, and yet once again, he passed the open doors of the pool hall; and once he made as if he would turn and enter. But the impulse apparently died as soon as it was born and he went on.

At the corner below, on the third retracing of his steps, he crossed the street and walked back on the opposite side. This time there was no hesitation. Quickening his pace, he went rapidly up the avenue, and there was decision even in the snap of the latch when he opened the gate in the hedge-hidden fence of the Stillwell front yard. As he mounted the porch steps Margery met him. She was dressed in white, and for a moment her figure was a mere white blot before his eyes.

"I HAD to come," he said. "I've been putting it off for three days. Will you talk to me for a few minutes?" Then he added: "You needn't be afraid. I'm perfectly harmless to-night."

"Afraid?" she smiled. "I thought you knew me better than that. Won't you sit down?"

He dropped heavily into one of the porch chairs and the cold pipe was still clamped between his teeth.

"You have good cause to be afraid of me, if you only knew it," he said slowly; and then: "I'm up against it, Margery. I can't talk to John; he wouldn't understand. But maybe you can."

"Tell me," she said, seating herself in the hammock.

"This money—this devil's legacy. It doesn't belong to me. Any other vagabond who might have happened along when I did would have just as good a right to it. And if it did belong to me—if I had even a shadow of right to it—there are the best of reasons why I shouldn't take it."

"Can you tell me the reasons?"

"I can tell you one of them, at least. I don't love Bethsaida; didn't love it any too well the morning when I was kicked off the train and found myself in the one place I'd been carefully dodging. I'll leave it to you to say whether or not the town has been doing anything since that morning to make me love it any better."

"It hasn't," she returned promptly.

"All right; that's that. At first, I meant to move on—when I could—when they should let me out of jail. Then John turned up."

"I know."

He was silent for a little while, and then he said: "Where is your father?"

"He is in the living-room, reading."

Another silence; then: "Have you any idea why I've been hanging on here so long, sponging on John?"

"I have felt sure that you had a reason."

"That is like you—always to think the best rather than the worst. I did have a reason. Do you know anything about John's financial troubles?"

"As much as anybody, I think."

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"You knew that he owed the bank and couldn't pay?"

"Yes."

"Well, so did I. I was waiting to see what would come of it when his time was up. Whittlesea had planned deliberately to take the Star Works away from him; to rob him in cold blood. That was perfectly evident to me from the first. You knew it, too, didn't you?"

"I was afraid of it; yes."

"I made up my mind that I'd linger around and see it out; that I wouldn't let the robbery go through, if I could help it."

"I know."

He straightened himself quickly.

"What do you know?"

"I know, as well as I want to, that you were the one who broke into the Security vault and found John's note and destroyed it. I think I have known it all along."

"You have?"

"Yes. I knew you were not as bad as you tried to make people believe you were."

"THAT is one way to look at it," he said, smiling grimly. "But the law would call it a crime—which it was—and send me up for a term of years. I didn't care, especially. I was a hungry dog, and John had fed me. It was the only way I knew to get square with him. Then those two amateur hold-ups butted in. I knew they were there—up-stairs; I saw them go up."

"You didn't try to stop them?"

"No; I had my own job to finish, and I finished it. To wind it up properly, I had to go down to John's shop and break into his office and safe. I was on my way back when I heard the old man yell for help."

"And again you were not as black as you have painted yourself."

"Oh, well: I knew that frantic screech meant torture of some kind. I suppose there is a sort of primal instinct in all of us that makes us rush to a rescue. I didn't stop to think much about it."

"No, you wouldn't," she commented soberly. "But all this isn't what you came here to tell me."

"No," he agreed, "it isn't. I'm all at sea, Margery. I don't know what to do. Amos Whittlesea was in the same boat when he died; he didn't know what to do with his money. And now I've got it, *I* don't know what to do with it. It is going to be a curse, whatever is done with it."

"Isn't it in your power to make it a blessing?"

"No. In the hands of a good man it might be that—but not in mine. I've spoiled my chance. I can't do as you suggested the other day—when we met out on the Walnut Grove road: stay here and be the god out of the machine for this debt-ridden town."

"Why can't you?"

"Because I have left at least two trains of powder behind me that will eventually take fire and blow me higher than Haman's gallows."

"What are they?"

"I need mention only one of them. Sooner or later, the dynamiting of the vault will be traced to me. There was a witness: somebody who drove up in an auto and looked in at the side door of the bank while I was at work. This man Macallaster, across the street, is on the trail, and if I'm any judge of human nature, he'll follow it like a hound dog. You may say that the vault and all it holds is mine, and that is the fact. But at the time when I yegged it, it wasn't mine."

"And the other powder train?" she prompted.

"It reaches a long way back into the past, but it is none the less deadly. Some time, after you are safely married to John, he may tell you about it."

Again a silence came and sat between them. It was the young woman who finally broke it.

"What makes you think John and I are to be married, Archer?" she asked.

"The eternal fitness of things. John loves you, and he has a clear right to love you."

SHE did not comment upon this. Instead, she went back to the matter of Amos Whittlesea's fortune.

"You say that Amos Whittlesea's money is a curse, and that you can't turn it into a blessing; what is the alternative?"

"For three years I've been consistently taking the line of least resistance, Margery. At heart I guess I'm still the tramp, the shuffler. The easy thing to do is to hand all the mortgages and promises-to-pay back to the people who have signed them, put on my old clothes, and hit the

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grit again. I've about made up my mind to do it."

Her cool-voiced retort came like the flick of a whip.

"If you can do that, you're not the man I've been taking you for, Archer Griffith!"

"Why shouldn't I do it?"

"Because you know perfectly well that nobody in this world was ever benefited by getting something for nothing; that there is no surer way to degrade and debase people than by giving them something they have never earned."

"Then you think I ought to stay and face all the possible—I might say the inevitable—consequences?"

"I know this: that you will stay if you will give your better self a chance to be heard."

"There it is again—you and John," he demurred musingly. "Will neither of you ever learn that what is once lost in a man can never be regained? Haven't I proved to both of you in every way that I have broken with all the decent traditions?"

"No," she denied, and she did not enlarge upon the simple negation.

Some one was coming down the sidewalk, and Griffith did not speak again until the footsteps of the passer-by had died away in the distance. Then, without preface:

"When you were a young girl, Margery, you were a church member, and a rather devout one. Did college take that all out of you?"

The low voice from the hammock answered promptly. "I hope not, Archer."

"You knew my father—and loved him."

"I did."

"Did you love him any the less because he couldn't accept the things you accepted?"

"Of course not. But he did accept some of them before he died."

"How do you know?"

"I was with him a good deal that last summer. I used to run over and take him little things that he could eat—there wasn't much that he could eat. He used to call me his girl-son. He was a dear, Archer. It was only Bethsaida's narrow fanaticism that he couldn't accept; that and the smugness and hypocrisy that sometimes went with it."

"Do you believe at all in the supernatural, Margery?"

"All the world does, in one form or another—all humanity, at least. The brute is your only true materialist."

"That wasn't quite what I meant. I was thinking of the springs of action; the prompting to do this or that or the other thing. Do they originate in the man himself—the individual? Or are they set in motion or influenced by something outside of the man?"

"I'm afraid that is too deep for me. I believe in God—the God of the Bible—and I accept whatever that belief connotes."

"This God of yours: is He a personal God, taking such an inconsiderable atom as man, the individual man, into His account?"

"Why not? If He is God, He is infinite."

"Don't you think that the world—the world of to-day—has lost that vision of him?"

"SOMETIMES it seems so. But we pay when we do. It is the swing of the pendulum. We surge one way until we see the bottomless pit opening for us, and then we surge back. And I suppose it isn't in poor human nature to come to rest in the middle arc of pure common sense and sanity."

Griffith dropped the cold pipe into his pocket.

"You don't talk like any other woman I've ever known, Margie. Where do you get it?"

"Where do we get anything? You can't tell, and I can't."

"Religion," he said thoughtfully; "and with it comes duty. Do you believe in duty?—the necessity of doing things that you don't want to do merely because something inside of you, or outside of you, nags you?"

"Everybody does," was the steady rejoinder. "It was your duty to go to war, and you went. You thought it was your duty to smash the bank vault to do John a service, and you did it."

"Oh, yes; things of that sort," he conceded. "But I had no disposition to do otherwise in either case."

"But you are indisposed to stay here and take up the burden which old Amos Whittlesea, whether wickedly or not we shall never know, laid upon you?"

"You've said it. Every vagrant fiber of me revolts at the thought."

"In other words, the devil is fighting for your soul, Archer. No, that isn't cant; it

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is merely a form of words that we use because it has become familiar. But the fact is there, and you know it. Every good thing in you is telling you that you ought to stay, and every bad thing whispers that you needn't. You spoke a while ago of consequences: the brave man doesn't reckon consequences. And you are no coward."

"How do you know I'm not?"

"Because I know you."

"Just the same, I *am* reckoning consequences—a lot of them; one of them is a temptation too vile to put into words. At heart, Margery, I guess I'm little better than a pagan and a barbarian. During the past three years when I have seen anything that I wanted, I reached out and took it. Growing up side by side with the cave-man promptings there have been other things, among them a loathing for the smug decencies and proprieties of the well-behaved life. At this moment I can't conceive of anything more banal and soul-destroying than running a private bank in Bethsaida."

This easing of the nausea of his soul brought a quiet laugh from the gently swinging hammock.

"You are only a headstrong boy, after all, Archer. What you need most is a little mothering. If you'll stay, I'll mother you." She leaned forward and looked through the window of the front room into the lighted living-room beyond. "I think we'll have to stop at that. Daddy's gone to sleep in his chair, and if I don't go in and wake him, it will spoil his night's rest. It always does when he sleeps in the evening."

Griffith got up obediently and she slipped out of the hammock and went to the steps with him. At the instant of parting he turned to her.

"Have you forgiven me for what I did the other day, Margery—out on the Walnut Grove road?"

"That?" she said lightly. "When you were eight and I was four you kissed me a good many times. And since I've promised to be a mother to you——" He was standing, hat in hand, upon the step below her: she took his face between her palms and her lips brushed his forehead. "Now will you be a good boy?" she said.

"Wait," he begged, as she turned to go in; and while she lingered: "Do you still say your prayers at night, Margery—as you used to when you were a little girl?"

"And if I do?"

"I want you to ask your God to blot me out if He sees that the devil is going to be too many for me. You'll do that much for me, won't you—if only for the sake of the old times? Good night."

And through the deepening summer night darkness which was diluted only a little at the street crossings by the inadequate small-town electrics he made his way slowly back to the house at the head of the avenue, walking bareheaded, and apparently so deeply buried in thought as to be heedless of the inequalities in the sidewalk over which he went stumbling along.

TWO weeks after Griffith, wandering aimlessly in search of some hidden path that would lead to the valley of decision, had come finally to rest on the Stillwell front porch, Bethsaida was still gasping; this though the amazing happenings had begun the full fortnight earlier, namely, on a day when Lafe Hatcher, the town's leading contractor and builder, had spread the news that he had been given a liberal order to remodel the old Security Bank building.

"Had the plans all drawed out, engineer-fashion, when he give me the job"—thus Hatcher to a gaping constituency in the office of the Bethsaida Planing Mill. "I says, says I, 'Mr. Griffith, all them changes is goin' to run into money,' and he says: 'Damn the money, Lafe; go to it, and make the place look more like a bank and less like a junk shop. And don't be all summer about it, at that.' Which is what makes me say what I does: when do I get that wainscot stuff? And how long have we got to wait for them fixtures you ordered from Cinci?"

So it came about that in less time than Bethsaida had ever witnessed the beginning of a building undertaking, the sounds of hammer and saw, and the scrape of the bricklayer's trowel were heard in the land, and half a carload of modern bank fittings came from Cincinnati, and for a trying interval the bank force worked under shelter scaffolding, with Griffith sitting at the seat of custom in one corner under a rough-board penthouse of semi-privacy.

But the most breath-taking of the gasps came when Pott, holding forth to a circle of his cronies in the barber shop while Tony Schiff was giving him an anti-dandruff massage, told of his first collision, now barely

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an hour old, with Amos Whittlesea's heir and successor in the Bethsaidan money mart.

"You see, he had me right where the hair was short. I had a sight draft that had to be met, and my note at the bank was due. I had money enough to take care of one of 'em, but not both. I ain't ashamed to tell you people that I went into that torn-up, wrecked-up place over yonder with my nerves on edge. If Arch was going to be mean about it and make me take up that note, I was all set to be up against it, good and plenty."

"Oho!" said Cartwright, who was waiting for a shave. "So it's 'Arch' with you now, is it?"

"Say! I can't twist my tongue to any 'mister' for that boy that grew up right here amongst us—and you won't either, after you've had your first hoe-down with him. When I went in, he didn't even let me begin my little tale of woe. 'Good morning, Uncle Jeff,' says he, as chipper as a new dollar bill, 'I see they've got you by the scruff of your neck this morning. Your balance won't cover that Chicago draft and your note, too.'

"You bet, that jarred me pretty hard. It showed that he was keeping tab on every little thing, the same as old Amos used to—how much a man owed, and when it came due, and how much he had in the bank to fall back on. So I said, 'No; that's what I came over to see you about.'

" 'Sure!' he says—just like that. Easy, Tony; I ain't got much hair left, and you needn't rub it all off. Then he shot me one right on the jaw. 'Of course, you'll have to take care of that draft; you mustn't let that go to protest. Consequently, you'll have to renew your paper. That will be all right. Did you bring a new note with you?'

"I HAD one all filled out and signed, just on the chance that I might be able to put it across on him, so I fished 'er out and passed 'er over. He looked at it, made some figures in a corner, and handed it back. 'Just give it to Uncle Peter Larkin as you go out, and he'll return the old one,' he says. I looked at the figures he'd made on it and stood there with my mouth open like a chicken with the pip. Then I recollected that he was an engineer, and no banker, so I says, 'Ain't you made a mistake figuring this discount, Mr. Griffith?'

"At that, he looks up and grins, same as he used to when he was a boy, and says: 'See here, Uncle Jeff; I'm just Archer to people who have known me all my life—if they'll be good enough to call me so. And about the discount; I see you've been paying between eight and ten per cent. That's altogether too high a rate for these times on good commercial paper. I guess, if it were all figured up, the bank would be owing you money, instead of you owing it, but we won't go into the back numbers. I've figured your note at six per cent, which is quite enough.'

"Well, say! you could have knocked me down with a broomstraw. I choked a few times and says, 'D'you mean it, Arch?' 'Sure I mean it,' he comes back. Then he put the cap-sheaf on the whole stack. 'Your business brings you in contact with the neighboring farmers a good bit, Uncle Jeff,' he says: 'just pass the word to them as you see them that the bank still has money to lend at fair rates of interest; and be sure and don't forget that word 'fair.' We don't want to hog the whole thing, you know.'

"By gollies, boys, I don't know how I ever found my way out of that dump. I reckon I stumbled over everything there was in the place before I got to the door. I'd forgot all about the danged draft, and had to go back and fix that up with Larkin afterwards."

Cartwright was chuckling in wheezy fashion.

"Remember what you did up in Jim Macallaster's office one night a couple of weeks or so ago, Jeff?" he asked.

"Yes; and my name's off that list, right now," roared Pott in his gentlest whisper. "And I'll tell Jim so when I see him."

"Mac won't quit, for all that," Cartwright prophesied. "He'll tell you that Arch is just throwing dust. Maybe he is, and maybe he ain't. But if he ain't, what's struck him?"

"I've got my own notion about that," said Pott, as he settled back in the tilting chair for the shave which was to follow the head rub. "You hear a lot about how sudden money ruins most folks, and I guess maybe it does. But there might be just one time in a thousand million when it would

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work t'other way round. I had a boy in the store one time—Eb Rexford, you recollect him—and he wasn't worth the powder it would take to blow him up till I began to load him up with responsibility. Then he flopped right over, and inside of a year he was too all-fired good for me to keep; I couldn't pay him enough to keep him. That boy is head buyer for one of the biggest implement houses in Chicago, right now!"

"Huh!" said Ingleburt, the druggist, who was also waiting for a shave. "I've heard of all sorts of dope for reforming the perishing, but that's a new one on me. I'll see if I can't get some millionaire to die and leave my kid a fortune. I've tried everything else on him."

THUS the beginning of the new era for Bethsaida; and the continuation was not less reversibly upsetting. To a clatter of mechanics' tools a new and refurbished Security Bank rose out of the wreckage of the old, and canny townsfolk held their breath when they mentioned the sum that the modern equipment must be costing Griffith, and chuckled when they spoke of how Amos Whittlesea must not only be turning over in his grave, but turning veritable handsprings therein if his miserly soul were cognizant of the way in which his precious hoard was dissipating itself in luxuries.

Since humanity in the mass is what it is, neither celestially charitable nor irreclaimably vindictive, it was only natural that there should be a reaction from the attitude of holy horror in which the late vagabond had been held. As pinched debtors came one by one to Griffith's spick and span new office-room behind the bank proper, and were met with what passed for the most genial cordiality, their woes assuaged, and told to go in peace, there was an abrupt reversal of the sentence which had been so hastily pronounced upon the vagrant of a few weeks earlier. And when Griffith came to the rescue of the Brown Emporium, tottering upon the edge of failure and bankruptcy, taking over its affairs with a vigorous hand and ably fighting Brown's battle with his creditors by declaring to them that all the resources of the bank were behind the embarrassed debtor, there were many to speak of the reclaimed tramp as that noblest work of God, an honest man; to recall his worthy father, and to say that blood was bound to tell, in the long run.

The effect of all this upon Griffith himself was what might have been expected. Regeneration may possibly come within two halves of a minute in some instances—the thing is not wholly inconceivable; but in the many it is a plant of slow growth, and Griffith was no exception to the general rule. At first, a supreme contempt lay in the back of his brain, child of the only emotion stirred by demi-volting public opinion.

A little later, however, the contempt gave place to satirical mirth.

"I laugh myself to sleep every night," he told Margery—of late, he had been drifting oftener and oftener to the Stillwell porch in the moonlit summer evenings. "It is better than a play because it is so damnably real. It shows what a broken reed public acclaim is in the final analysis. Two months ago these same people would have run me out of town for a public nuisance, if they had known how, and had had the nerve."

"You mustn't be too uncharitable," put in the one who had promised to do the mothering.

"It isn't lack of charity; it is merely the ability to see things as they are. I take the alleluias for what they are worth. It was thumbs down for me a little while ago, and it would be again if the wind should shift."

"Which is another way of saying that all you've gone through hasn't really touched you. You are flinty hard, Archer."

"Am I?"

"You are, indeed. I am afraid you will have to suffer again before you will be clay fit for the potter's hand."

"'Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth,' I suppose you would say," he suggested, with a wry smile. "Well, I'm in for my chastening, all right; don't make any mistake about that. In fact, I'm getting it as I go along. Don't ask me how: you'll find out soon enough." And from that he pulled the talk around to the incidents of the day, telling her, with the satirical humor well to the fore, how he was actually hoodwinking the townsfolk into the belief that he knew something about banking.

"UNCLE Peter Larkin is the secret of it," he said. "He pulls the strings and I'm only the puppet. But the dear public

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doesn't know; it thinks I'm a twenty-four-carat miracle. Old Joshua Simms drove in from his farm to-day to pay the interest on his mortgage, and he said: 'Why, lookee here, Tom-Arch, I thought you was eddicated f'r a ingineer?' I laughed and told him that if he had been with the army overseas he'd know that an engineer was supposed to know everything—which was the fact."

These evening visits on the Stillwell porch were never prolonged. After a half-hour or so, a spirit of restlessness seemed to take possession of him, and the disturbance was always augmented if Margery happened to sit where the light from one of the parlor windows fell upon her. It was when he found himself dwelling too persistently upon the soft curves of neck and shoulder, the exquisite loveliness of the beautiful eager face half turned toward him, and realized that he was holding himself down to the comradely commonplaces only by main strength, that he knew it was time for him to go.

On the present occasion she went as far as the gate with him, as she often did, and at the parting moment held him with a question.

"Has anything been heard of those two wretched boys, Archer?"

"Harriford and Jefferson? I don't know. Judge Gorman telephoned me to-day to ask if I wouldn't add something to the reward which the county is offering for their discovery and arrest. From that, I suppose they are still safely at large."

"Did you add to the reward?"

"No; I couldn't quite do that, even as Amos Whittlesea's heir. I know you will say that one of them is a murderer, but—oh, well; you know the old saying, about honor among thieves. Who am I to help drag another man to the gallows?"

"I'm glad you didn't," she said softly, and with that she let him go.

The ex-derelict, still domiciled at the Kingsley house, but insisting now upon splitting the household expenses with his host, found Kingsley smoking on the porch. Griffith filled his own pipe, and for a time the two sat in amicable silence. Finally Kingsley said: "Been down at the bank?"

"No," was the reply.

The question had been merely an ice-breaker. Kingsley knew very well where his companion had been, and Griffith's frequent visits to the Stillwell cottage were troubling him. If there were nothing worse in prospect, small-town gossip would soon be busy, coupling Margery's name and Griffith's. And with the dread thing that Griffith had confessed lying in the background. It was a breaching of the barriers that even the closest friendship does not entirely level, but Kingsley thought he had his warrant.

"Do you think you ought to go there so often, Archer?" he asked.

GRIFFITH did not affect to misunderstand. But it was an upbubbling of the old Ishmaelitish rancor that prompted his reply.

"Why shouldn't I go there, if I want to—and if Margery doesn't object?"

Kingsley pulled hard at his pipe.

"You know this town as well as I do, Arch—and what it will presently be saying. For Margery's sake you can't afford to set the tongues to wagging."

"She doesn't care for the tongues; and neither do I."

"That is exactly the point," Kingsley cut in soberly. "She doesn't care; she is too good and sweet and pure to care. Which is precisely the reason why you should do the caring for both of you."

"You don't understand. We were children together."

"But you are children no longer. You are playing with fire, Archer, and I think you know it as well as I do."

"I don't know what you mean"—gruffly.

"Yes, you do. You are a married man."

"Well, what of that?"

"Margery doesn't know it."

"Well, again, what of that?"

"You are bluffing now," was the quiet accusation. "Either that, or you know women a lot less than you ought to know them."

"Jealous?" said Griffith, with a nasty edge in his tone.

"I'm out of it, and you can leave me out. Margery will never wear my name, but I'll fight for her, just the same."

"What makes you think you'll have to fight for her?"

"Because I know women—a little."

"Go on; get it off your chest."

"I mean to. Margery is best of the best—

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I think you'll agree with me in that. She is one of the pure to whom all things are pure. Did you ever get the full force of that saying, Archer?"

"Maybe not. What is it?"

"In a word, it's just this: an innocent blindness to the evil of evil."

"You'll have to make it plainer than that."

"I will. There is that in every normal woman which may at times rise mightier than all the restraints and conventions that have ever been invented. The name of it is love—love for the chosen man."

"What's the rest of it?"

"Merely this: that when love takes possession, reason, good repute, all the things we've been taught to defer to, become as nothing. Don't get me wrong. The love may be as white and clean as the driven snow; and just because it is so white and shining, it blinds."

FOR three slow drags at his pipe Griffith did not speak. Then he said, still with the edge in his voice: "Aren't you going rather far afield?"

"Generalities, you mean? No. Love may be blind, but I'm not. If you are not man enough to be strong for two——"

"Drop it!" Griffith cut in almost savagely; and he had refilled and relighted his pipe before he spoke again—and then it was of an entirely different matter.

"Have you seen Macallaster lately?—to talk with him, I mean?" he asked.

Kingsley shook his head.

"No occasion," he said. "I've never liked the man, and I think the feeling has been mutual."

"He came to see me to-day," Griffith went on. "There is a mortgage on the *Telegraph*, and another on the real estate. You knew that, didn't you?"

"I took it for granted. Old Amos never let anything get out of his hands, once it got in. Did Macallaster pay up?"

"You know very well he didn't—couldn't. But he didn't come to beg; he came to demand. And he backed the demand with a threat."

"Is it tellable?"

"To you, yes. The demand was that I cancel the mortgages."

"And the threat?"

"He informed me quite coolly that he had been looking up my record for the past three years, all of it—and he emphasized the 'all.' If I should refuse to come across with the cancellation, he'd begin to publish a few things in the paper."

"Blackmail—pure and simple!"

"He doesn't call it so; he says it's a duty owed to his fellow townspeople."

"But a duty that he will forego—for a consideration?"

"So it would seem. But that wasn't all. He asked me when I was going to publish my confession."

"What confession?"

"I asked him, and he told me. The confession that it was I, and not the Harriford-Jefferson pair, who dynamited the bank vault."

"What utter nonsense! Is the man crazy?"

"You'd say so, wouldn't you? And yet he asserts quite calmly that he is now in a position to prove that I did dynamite the vault."

"Of course you told him to go ahead and shoot his gun?"

"Something like that—coupled with an invitation to get out of my sight. Just the same——"

"See here," said Kingsley, righting his tilted chair with a crash, "you're not going to knuckle under to that sour-faced beggar who stepped into your father's shoes. Let him shoot. You have friends enough in this town now to fight him to a finish!"

"Don't bank on any such thing as that, John," was the grave rejoinder. "Just now, for some folks whose shackles I've loosened a bit, I'm a little tin god; but I know humankind, and so do you. Let somebody, Macallaster or another, yell, 'Stop thief!' and the whole pack will be in full cry behind me. I know."

"But you're not going to let him blackmail you?"

"No. When the mortgages fall due, I shall put them into Travers's hands and tell him to get busy."

"That's the talk. Macallaster is a drawback to this town; he always has been. I'd like to see him chased off the lot."

"There are quite a number of little things that ought to be done toward putting Bethsaida on the map; but when it comes to chasing, I shall probably be the chasee, and not the chaser. However, that's on the lap of the gods."

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And Griffith put his pipe away and announced his intention of going to bed.

RUMMAGING in the bank vault from time to time, Griffith unearthed a number of curious things; mortgages and deeds of trust which, upon investigation, turned out to have been paid, but which, probably owing to the ignorance of the payer as to his rights, had never been surrendered or canceled; notes and other obligations which fell into the same category; small trust funds that had apparently never been accounted for: all these evidences of the grasping unscrupulousness of the old miser-banker whose creed seemed to have been never to let any valuable get out of his hands while there remained a shadow of excuse for retaining it.

Pursuing this search one day after banking hours, Griffith came upon a thing of mystery in the shape of Tom Gaffney's note of hand for ten thousand dollars. Its date showed it to be three years old. It was payable "on demand," and there were no endorsements to show that any payments had ever been made on it, or that the interest had been met.

The following morning he showed this note to Larkin, and the mystery thickened a little when he learned that this large loan—large for Bethsaida—did not appear at all in the books of the bank.

"What's the answer, Uncle Peter?" he asked, when the old cashier had denied any previous knowledge of the transaction.

"Gaffney is probably the only one who can tell, now that Mr. Whittlesea's gone," was the sober reply.

"But what do you think?"

The older man wagged his head as one who would much rather not say what he thought.

"I don't like to speak ill of the dead, Archer; but Mr. Whittlesea wasn't any too particular as to the source. You know, as well as I do, that he had the reputation of taking money anywhere it was to be found."

"But in this case he has apparently given money instead of taking it. Gaffney certainly wouldn't have signed this note without getting some sort of value received."

Since Larkin could give him no information, Griffith locked the Gaffney note in a drawer of the new desk in the new private office, meaning to dig more deeply into the mystery at some future time. But it so chanced that he was saved the trouble. Late that afternoon, just at closing time—his closing time at six o'clock; not the bank hour of three—the street door opened and Gaffney came in, somber-faced, and with the cold, fishy eyes even less expressive than usual. Not since he had been named as Amos Whittlesea's legatee had Griffith had speech with Bethsaida's thorn in the flesh, and it seemed an odd coincidence that he should make his appearance so aptly after the unearthing of the three-year-old note of hand.

"Well, I'm here on the day and date," he said, casting his gross body into one of the new chairs. Then, with a glance around the room: "Don't look much like the old spider's den, Arch, but I reckon the web's here, just the same."

"YES," said Griffith, meaning only to bridge the gap and let Gaffney do the talking.

"You goin' to put the screws on to an old pal the same as Amos did, Arch?"

"I'm nobody's pal at present."

"Umph!" Gaffney took a roll of bills from his pocket and tossed it upon the desk. "There's your rake-off, then."

"What's this?" Griffith asked.

"What I said: your split on the business o' the two houses. It's a damn' robbery, and I was kind o' hopin' that maybe, for the sake of old times, you'd have a heart."

"I see," said Griffith. "Amos Whittlesea capitalized you and took a share of the profits. I've often wondered if the old man wasn't backing you, Tom. But I'm not in that line of business." And he tossed the roll of bank-notes back into Gaffney's lap.

"But, say—see here, Arch! You ain't goin' to turn me down, are you?"

"Neither up nor down, Tom. But it's chasing itself around in the back part of my head that you are not an asset to this town. I've been thinking of it right pointedly for quite some little time."

"The hell you say!" was the growling retort. "How long has it been since you got religion, Arch?"

Griffith sat back in his chair.

"We'll run the cards as they are, without shuffling them, Tom. What I was a few weeks ago, and what I am now, may be two

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different things—or they may not: that doesn't enter into the question. What I am trying to tell you is that I think it is about time for you to pack up and move on."

The fishy eyes were beginning to come alive and grow red, and the ham-like hands were opening and closing slowly as if they were groping for something to clutch and crush.

"Well, I'm damned!" was the grating outburst. "*You'd* run me out, would you? —*you*, that a little while ago was skinnin' come-ons for me out at the place on the Willow Springs road—and damn' glad to get your three squares and a rake-off, at that!"

"THAT was yesterday; and to-day is to-day," said Griffith equably. "The times change and we change with them. I think you'll have to vacate the premises, Tom. Personally, you don't offend me; but you are certainly a drag on Bethsaida—and have been for a long time. You know you would have had to move a good while ago if you hadn't had the backing of the town's one and only banker. But now the clock has struck thirteen and you haven't that backing any more. Am I making it plain enough?"

Gaffney swore a great and mouth-filling oath.

"Let's see how you're goin' to chase me, you ——" The eruption of insulting epithets descriptive of snitchers and double-crossers paused only when the Gaffney vocabulary, rich in such vituperative, was exhausted.

Griffith ignored the profane abuse as if he hadn't heard it. "The manner of chasing you is easy," he returned calmly. "Three years ago, Amos Whittlesea made you sign a note in his favor for ten thousand dollars. I take it he wanted to have some sort of hold on you that he could use at short notice. That note is still good, and it is payable on demand. It's go or pay, for yours, Tom. I'm sorry, but that's final."

Gaffney sprang out of his chair with a nimbleness surprising in a man of his build and began to pace the floor. At one of the turns he wheeled and stood for a moment before the glass door connecting the private office with the bank work-room. Only a close observer would have remarked the swift eye-search, through the glass, of the outer room; a search that proved there were no listeners nor witnesses in the larger room.

"You've got that note, Arch?" he rumbled hoarsely; this without turning around.

"I have."

Like a clumsy wind vane whirling in a sudden blast, Gaffney spun on his heel, and his right hand whipped to the hip pocket. But the weapon remained undrawn, and the command to stand and deliver got no further than the introductory oath. That was because Griffith had silently opened a drawer of the new desk while the big man's back was turned, and Gaffney found himself looking down the barrel of a weapon much more formidable than the one he had meant to drag out of its concealment in his pocket.

"You are a good bit too slow, Tom," said Griffith, with the vagrant grin drawing at the corners of his eyes; "also, you forget that in these days a gun is a very necessary article of furniture in a bank. Sit down and we'll thresh this thing out to a finish."

Gaffney dropped into a chair and waved the pistol aside.

"Turn that gat the other way," he growled. "I can't listen good when I'm bein' stuck up."

"ALL right; here's the lay-out. For the sake of old times I don't want to be too hard on you. I don't know how much or how little old Amos had invested in your game, though I don't suppose it was anything like the figure of the note I hold; but that doesn't matter. I don't want your money. You can have two weeks in which to sell out—both places—and fade away. Do it, and I'll never ask you to pay a dollar on the note. That's fair, isn't it?"

"And if I don't hike?"

"I rather imagine you will, when you come to think it over. You've sort of worn out your welcome, Tom. You've been undermining the constitutions of quite a lot of young fellows in Bethsaida for a long time, first and last, and, as I say, for the good of the public you ought to vanish from our midst. No special hurry, you know; you've got two weeks."

"But I'm askin' you, what if I don't go?"

"That brings on more talk. If you're still here two weeks and a day from—well, we'll say from to-morrow noon, I shall put

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ike a clumsy wind vane whirling in a sudden blast. Gaffney spun on his heel, and his right hand whipped to the hip pocket.

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your note into my lawyer's hands for collection. It'll clean you up, Tom; you know it will. Your two places together are not worth ten thousand dollars."

For a long minute Gaffney sat staring frowningly at the big service revolver that Griffith had laid on the desk. Then, without a word, he heaved himself out of his chair and went away, slamming the street door vigorously as he vanished.

Quite methodically Griffith reached for the flannel pad in the pistol-holding drawer and with it wiped the finger marks from the weapon before he returned it to its place, chuckling quietly as he went through the mechanical routine of the trained soldier.

"Now I wonder what made me read the riot act like that to old Tom?" he asked himself musingly. "Do I really care a tinker's dam for Bethsaida's morals? No, I guess that part of it was pure bunk; I guess the notion just jumped at me when he flashed that wad of dirty money. God knows, I'm nobody to start a clean-up campaign in this or any other town. Never mind; the thing's done now, and I'll put it over. But I'm sorry for Roxie. Maybe, if I'd stopped long enough to think of her—— Oh, hell—what's the difference, anyway? This world and another, and then come the fireworks. We're here to-day and gone to-morrow."

Breaking off his meditation, he pulled down the curtain of his desk on the still unfinished business of the day and went out to climb to a seat beside Kingsley in the auto in which the young ironmaster had just driven up from the Star plant.

IT WAS between nine and ten o'clock in the evening of the same day, as Griffith was returning from another poignant hour spent on the Stillwell porch—an hour in which no mention had been made of the episode of the late afternoon—that a car drew up at the curb beside him and a woman's voice spoke his name. It was dark under the street-bordering trees, but he knew the voice well enough.

"You, Roxie?" he said.

"It's nobody else. Get in and come a little drive with me."

Griffith knew what lay back of the mandatory invitation, but he did not hesitate. With a roar the roadster shot to the head of the avenue, and was whisked to the left into the short street that presently ran out and became a country road. When nothing but farm fences remained on either hand the young woman cut the motor to loafing speed and began on him.

"What's this you're trying to put across on us now, Archie?"

"You mean my talk with your father this afternoon?"

"You know what I mean."

Griffith took time to consider his answer. When he finally made it, it was calmly definitive.

"I guess it will have to go as it lies, Roxie. I didn't hunt for any of these responsibilities; but since they've been thrown at me——"

"RATS!" said the girl impatiently. "You don't need to give me any of that guff! Old Miser-Amos's money hasn't made an angel out of you this quick. What have you got against Dad?"

"Nothing, personally; I give you my word."

"Well, then, *why?*"

"I don't know that there is any why—that you could understand. But I've said it, and it's got to go."

"*I* can tell you why!" she shot back. "You want to get rid of me!"

"That is foolishness, Roxie. If I had thought of you hard enough at the time, I might not have done it. Why should I want to get rid of you?"

"You know damn' well, Arch Griffith! For a solid month you've been dodging me as if I had the plague. Oh, I've got eyes in my head. You're playing up to old Jud Stillwell's girl, and you're afraid I might butt in and gum the game. So you're running us off."

"Again I give you my word. If you knew a few things that you don't know, and that I'll never tell you, you'd see what a bone you are pulling. Your father chucked a wad of hush money at me and made me mad. That was all there was to it."

"Don't tell me!" was the angry retort. "I wasn't born yesterday, and what I know, I *know*. You can have the little highbrow for a few minutes, if you want her; I'm not caring about that. But you'll not give Dad and me the double-cross and get away with it. I'm here to tell you that much, Arch."

"Why won't I?"

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The speed was checked until another touch of the throttle would have stalled the slowly turning motor.

"Because, if you do, I'll split on you—even if it does break my heart to do it!"

Griffith laughed.

"ALL Bethsaida knows what I am and what I've been, Roxanna. And just now, because I hold the purse strings, it wouldn't believe anything you'd say about me."

"Bethsaida, maybe; but Jim Macallaster might believe me, and the county attorney might."

"Oh! So you are in on Macallaster's frame-up, are you?"

"Not yet; but I might be. He's been scraping the town with a fine-tooth comb trying to find me. Only he doesn't know it's me he wants."

"You shouldn't be so coy, Roxie."

"He doesn't know yet that it's me he's looking for," she repeated, disregarding his satirical interjection. "If he knew *I* was the one that stood at the bank door that night and saw you when you reached up to turn the light off——"

"Oh! So that's it, is it?" said Griffith. "And did Macallaster see you standing there?"

"No; it was old Jerry Ackerson, the printer. He rooms in the block on the other corner, and he'd got up to shut his windows against the storm. He saw me, but he didn't know who I was. If I tell Jim Macallaster——"

"But you won't tell him, Roxie; that's the one thing you won't do."

"So help me God, I will!—if you put the whip to Dad."

"Listen a minute: you know the world pretty well, Roxanna, and the men who live in it, but there are a few things that you haven't yet surrounded. I have nothing to gain and nothing to lose—I'm the hundredth man, you might say. It won't get you anything to send me back to the railroad ties or to jail, because I don't care. I'll not try to defend the ground I took with your father this afternoon; as I've said, I don't know what made me do it, unless it was because he stirred up some kind of a devil in me by taking it for granted that I was going to trail along in old Amos's footsteps. The point is just here; I *have* done it, and I don't go back."

The loafing car was approaching a crossroad. With a quick flick of the hand throttle, the girl sent the machine flying around the corner, stopped it, backed it for the turn, and sent it bounding over the rough country road on the way back to Bethsaida. No word was uttered on the swift return flight; the cut-out was open, and nothing short of a shout could have made itself heard. But when the avenue-head street had been traversed and the car was halted at the Kingsley gate, the girl made her final plea.

"DON'T make me hate you, Arch!" she begged, as he was groping for the latch of the car door. "I've stood for a lot; I've let you go on making love to that white-faced girl of Jud Stillwell's because I knew it wouldn't last—that you'd come back to me after it was over. But I can't stand for it if you pinch Dad. I know how to get you where it'll hurt the most, and before God, I'll do it if you drive me to it—I'll do it if it kills me!"

Griffith had found the latch, and he did not answer her until he stood on the sidewalk. And surely it was the evil genius which had once made him a vagabond and an outcast that prompted him in his final reply.

"See here, girl: some men drink whisky because they want to; and others because they're told they mustn't. You ought to know which bunch I run with. Go to it. As I've said, I've nothing either to gain or to lose. Good night."

With that he turned away and let himself through the Kingsley gate.

Archer begins to realize the spiritual rewards of doing the decent thing and, against his will, the dissolution of his cynicism sets in. See the December EVERYBODY'S—out November 15th.

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The Merry Wheel

The Wheel Turns and Turns—and Moves, Sometimes, After It Has Seemed to Come to Rest

By Otto Rung

THE Widow Pingel, owner of Café Right-Across (from Police Headquarters, of course), said frequently that Peter Kopp was a man without visible means of existence who never did a thing in the daytime, and then spent his nights breaking into strange houses. She was right.

Now this Peter Kopp was busy with his dinner at his regular table in the Café Right-Across. At the table next to his sat another gentleman who seemed to observe him with a great deal of interest. He wore a heavy brown ulster, while a very shiny silk hat rested in safety on the floor beneath his chair. He possessed also a pair of huge and military-looking mustaches, a long nose that seemed to be whitewashed, and a pair of eyes that turned much more readily sideways than straight ahead.

Having smelled pessimistically at the empty glass in front of him without being able to extract from it the slightest whiff of brandy, and having cleared his throat aggressively, this man in question remarked suddenly:

"Good afternoon, Peter Kopp."

As Peter Kopp had not had the honor of an introduction, he suggested that explanations were in order.

"You figure in the indictment," said the man in the ulster. "You will get a little invitation for next Monday with the other defendants. So you can see that we know you pretty well."

"There ain't yet been anything that could hold me," Kopp declared with scornful defiance. "They tried it on me oncet, but they had to draw a thick black line through my name. 'Not guilty,' said the Supreme Court, and it didn't help 'em that they used both Paragraph 230 and Paragraph 60."

"We know it," rejoined the other gentleman calmly. "The charge of burglary was dismissed for lack of evidence."

"Right you are," assented Kopp. "And they'll miss me every time. The judge ain't born yet what's going to get me, I tell you."

The gentleman at the other table picked up Peter Kopp's beer glass and raised it so that the light fell through it.

"That's how I knew you at once," he said, pointing toward the smears left by Kopp's thumb and forefinger on the sides of the glass. "You've left your visiting cards behind. Those never lie. Now we've got you in that indictment with several other thumbs. Those lines are called papillorious, you know, and they are not the same on any two people in the world."

"But they're on my own glass, just the same, legally speaking, which is more than can be said of yours."

"You might order a glass for me, too," suggested the other. "Just so as to get matters straight."

"And I might like to know for whom I was doing the ordering."

"HEADQUARTERS Detective No. 16, Lagerquist," the man in the ulster introduced himself, throwing a small brass disc nonchalantly on the table. He tried to grab it at once in order to put it back into the pocket whence it had issued, but in some inexplicable way Peter Kopp already had it.

"That ain't no police shield at all," he announced.

"I never said it was," Lagerquist admitted. "But most other people think it is.

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All I wanted was to put your intelligence to the test, Herr Kopp."

"That ain't nothing but a piece of brass such as piano makers put on their pianos," Kopp went on.

"Quite right, Herr Kopp. It's a memento of the time when I was a traveling salesman for Clause & Palme, piano manufacturers. Their mark is a C and a P and a pianist's hand, just like the Copenhagen police. I have gone on carrying it during my three years as a private detective—quite by accident, as you might say—and I still have it. Many a time I have dropped it on the table with my notebook when I was questioning some lady or gentleman who disputed my authority. It worked wonders, and of course, it wasn't my fault that those people didn't have your cleverness, Herr Kopp."

"Sort of confidence game, one might say, Herr Lagerquist?"

"But no longer. . . . I was head detective in Carla Söderbom's Private Bureau for Discreet Investigation, 'We See in the Dark,' North Bridge Street, with branch office in Malmö. The day before yesterday Carla got free lodgings in the lock-up at New Square because of a little private blackmailing affair against a young nobleman not yet of age. They sealed up the entire bureau, including the archives, and took all the paraphernalia to Police Headquarters—the black draperies, the skull with electric lamps in the eye-holes, the photographs of medieval tortures (taken on the spot, you know), and the whole ruck. And as I said, I am out of a job, and very thirsty. Suppose you blow me to a glass of something, Herr Kopp, and then we can talk business."

"When it comes to business, I prefer to go it on my own," said Kopp, but nevertheless he ordered rum, lemons and hot water for two. "I ain't got no head for them very cute tricks. That's your line—saying it with all due respect—and I've got my own which is different."

"You are not familiar with the modern division of labor, I take it," Lagerquist protested. "You and I—we can each work in his own way and yet pull together. You are said to be a first-class expert on locks. And I can tell you what's behind the locks."

"Safe deposit vaults of the National Bank," Kopp suggested. "Thanks, that much I know myself. And there ain't nothing in that line for me."

"PERHAPS not, but let me tell you in confidence, Herr Kopp, that thanks to my profession I know more than any other person in this country about the location of those safes that contain the right kind of property."

"Well, why don't you start an express company for the carting off of that sort of furniture? I know all about it, and it's nothing for me. Why don't you wait till Carla gets out again? No, siree, *that's* one of the paragraphs I never want to monkey with."

"I can assure you, Herr Kopp, that you need not do anything that isn't strictly in your own line. You stick to your pick, and I'll furnish the pincers. All I demand is that you show tact, efficiency and discretion in your work."

"I can make less noise than any other man in Denmark," Kopp declared. "I bet you I can get an alarm-clock from under the police inspector's pillow just when it's about to go off at six in the morning. I make so little noise when I work that the police can hear the grass grow while I'm at it. Let's get down to facts. What's your plan?"

"We need working capital," Lagerquist explained. "All I have is a miserable three hundred crowns which the police overlooked when they came for Carla. I spent one hundred on my outfit. Can you raise a couple of hundred more?"

Kopp nodded pensively.

"I left it with a fodder merchant for safekeeping, and it's in his safe now waiting for me."

"That's the stuff, Herr Kopp. That's the o. k. on the deal—read and approved. We'll meet again to-morrow."

The next clear night was used by the partners to investigate a large villa along the Shore Road not far from the city. Apartment houses flanked it on both sides, but a bit of garden kept them at bay. It looked old-fashioned, with its sun-scorched trellis-work and a wide balcony running along the second story, where all the windows were covered with heavy shutters. And yet it presented an aspect of solidity that was strengthened by a garage in the rear.

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Peter Kopp took in every detail before he rejoined Herr Lagerquist behind a hedge farther down the road.

"Trellis all rotten—can't hold a man. But here's something queer. There's a lot of iron steps in the front wall leading right up to the balcony—a regular ladder of salvation, one might say."

"I thought so," the detective nodded. "The man who lives here don't always care to use the front door. Once I was on his trail for two months at the request of a lady of high theatrical rank, and I know a thing or two about him. He ran a lottery in Sweden without license, and then he went in for one hundred per cent investments, and now he's lending money to clerks against three hundred per cent interest. Every Tuesday and Friday he gives a party. The day after to-morrow is Friday, and that's our time for work. I'll get myself invited, and you have to come by way of the balcony."

Next day Herr Lagerquist acquired a white waistcoat, a salt and pepper redingote, as good as new, freshly creased trousers, and boots with brightly colored tops. To these were added an immaculate new silk hat and a magnificent seal ring bought from the Danish-Brazilian Gem Emporium in Trap Street.

Thus fortified, Herr Lagerquist crossed the Sound to Malmö on the earliest ferry to be had from Copenhagen Friday morning. Malmö is the jumping-off point for innumerable Swedish gentlemen in search not only of the greater gaiety that has made the Danish capital famous, but also, and still more, of the incognito that goes with an unannounced visit to a foreign country.

Herr Lagerquist carried a strong-smelling new leather portfolio containing the working capital, which had been increased to no less than seven hundred crowns by an unexpectedly generous contribution from Peter Kopp. No sooner had he landed on the other shore than Herr Lagerquist changed this sum into Swedish bills. Then he breakfasted quietly in the principal hotel in Malmö.

At four o'clock in the afternoon he boarded the ferry again. He was then in excellent spirits, a rich supply of extra fine port having perceptibly heightened the color of his complexion.

IN THE smoking cabin he formed the acquaintance of three other gentlemen who promptly professed themselves on their way to Copenhagen in search of diversions which could not be had as easily or as safely on their own side of the Sound. To these he introduced himself as Mr. Moberg from Chicago, a Swedish-American pork packer engaged in a sentimental journey through his native land. Thanks to a childhood spent in the little Scandian town of Landskrona and four horrible years of bartending in the Klondike, Herr Lagerquist's Swedish-American version of the English language seemed quite convincing.

Having ordered a cordial with his coffee, Herr Lagerquist, who had now become Mr. Moberg, gave his attention almost undividedly to the various waiters at work in the cabin. One of these seemed more promising than the rest, and it was with a happy heart he saw this very man bring the ordered refreshments.

When the tray stood on the table, Herr Lagerquist essayed a discreet wink with his left eye. To this the Ganymede responded with a blank stare, which did not in the least confound the winker.

"I have my connections, you see," Moberg-Lagerquist confided importantly to his new acquaintance. "I have them all over the world, and no one has better ones. I am particularly familiar with the more intimate aspects of social life in the city ahead of us."

The waiter kept an eye on him while he spoke, and later, when the Swedish gentlemen had settled their accounts, he showed signs of unbending to Herr Lagerquist, who had gathered the requisite data while working up a case for Carla Söderbom (it dealt with certain irregularities on the part of a minor about to become the head of a noble house).

"Get a few tickets for myself and my friends," said Lagerquist.

"For what?" muttered the waiter, still a little on his guard.

"I know Herr Winkelman on the Shore Road rather pleasantly," Herr Lagerquist rejoined with a gesture more eloquent than his words.

The waiter picked from an inside pocket four pieces of yellow cardboard on which was printed: THE MERRY WHEEL CLUB.

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"They're free," he remarked, holding out his hand expectantly, "you being a friend of the president."

Herr Lagerquist dropped a two-crown piece into the passively insistent hand, and later sold the tickets to his new friends for five crowns apiece. Finally he gave them a few valuable hints as to the character and methods of "The Merry Wheel."

Peter Kopp arrived in front of the Winkelman villa at nine o'clock sharp the same evening. The place seemed quite dark and deserted, but his keen eyes soon discovered glimpses of light coming from behind the closed shutters on the second floor. Various well-dressed persons arrived from time to time at the same spot, looked around cautiously, walked up the graveled walk to the front door, and were admitted after a discreet tapping at that door with their gloved fingers.

Finally at a quarter after nine appeared three gentlemen all of whom were loudly vociferous in the broad dialect that is used in the southernmost part of Sweden. One of them was Herr Lagerquist, his top hat pushed far back on his head and his white waistcoat glistening expansively in the moonlight. He was accompanied by those two of his new acquaintances who had managed to survive the dinner.

Peter Kopp vanished tactfully into the surrounding shadows. A few minutes later he slipped noiselessly along the foot of the villa to a point right beneath the balcony. In every direction, as far as the light from the street lamps penetrated, not so much as a cat was to be seen. Long ago the last rays reflected by a police helmet had faded away in the distance. Peter Kopp pulled on a pair of kid gloves—on account of possible finger-prints—and began to ascend the line of iron steps set into the trellis-covered front wall. Having reached a safe place on the balcony, where the vines practically surrounded him, he pressed his nose against the narrow opening between the shutters having entrance to the room within.

MR. MOBERG from Chicago and his company were admitted by a broad-shouldered and big-fisted man servant with a carefully shaved neck who wore a sort of military sack-coat and a pair of high-heeled patent leather shoes. Mr. Moberg displayed his ticket and impressed the Swedes still further by speaking in almost perfect Danish. The servant turned on the hall lights, nodded, and pointed silently across the red plush runner toward a gorgeous flight of marble stairs.

As soon as the gentlemen had deposited their overcoats and a crown apiece with an obese lady, they passed a hall of imposing dimensions: American rococo furniture with purple satin coverings grouped in a pompous circle on a checkered linoleum carpet; on the walls three enormous mirrors in glistening gilded fancy frames; also a gigantic portrait in oil of Herr Winkelman, reaching from ceiling to floor and presenting him in full evening dress with genuine Benicia diamonds inserted in the white shirt front—the stones unfortunately, on account of the size of the canvas, being placed utterly beyond the reach of the spectators below.

The servant opened a secret door and the visitors climbed a circular stairway where the sound of "the merry wheel" could be heard like the humming of a good-humored hornet.

A door opened, and they entered a room of extraordinary size, the walls of which were entirely covered with draperies. Seventeen or eighteen gentlemen were grouped around a long and wide table with a green cover on it, in the midst of which stood "the merry wheel." It consisted of a beautifully painted disc with a cross at the center. This disc revolved in a sort of bowl, along the edge of which appeared alternating squares of red and black, each square marked with a figure running from naught to thirty-six. Just then the wheel was whirling away at full speed. Its only passenger was a small ivory ball that seemed to dance over the quivering disc until, of a sudden, it dropped into a numbered groove.

"Red wins," cried Herr Winkelman, who was seated in front of the wheel. "Number seven turned up. Put up your stakes, gentlemen."

In his character of host, Herr Winkelman appeared in evening dress. His ink-black hair was combed forward in front of his ears where it formed a pair of neat little side-whiskers. Beneath his diminutive feminine nose a pair of shiningly black mustaches curled seductively upward. The

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black ribbon of his eye-glasses rested coquettishly behind one of his ears, while his powerful and hairy hands, adorned with numerous rings, lay on the table in front of him, framed in a pair of enormous cuffs.

"*Rien ne va plus*, gentlemen, as we say down in Monte Carlo. If you want soda, just order it. And then quiet, if you please. I am going to start the wheel again immediately."

Across the table from him sat his partner in shirt sleeves, his satin waistcoat with fleurs-de-lis on it kept in balloon-like expansion by a belly of commanding proportions. Large pearls of perspiration glittered on his neck, chin and bulging cheeks, all of which seemed to form a single titanic feature, while his tiny snub-nose and slit-like eyes almost disappeared in the mass of surrounding fat. He wielded a neat little rake and saw to it that to the bank was rendered what unto the bank belonged—silver coins and sundry bills that were dropped by pale and trembling fingers on the various fields into which the table cover had been divided.

"Please, gentlemen," Herr Winkelman cried to the newly arrived guests, "find places for yourselves. You are welcome as members of the club. The dues amount to twenty crowns, which will be taken out of your winnings when you leave. If you lose, you play without any charge—as special friends of the bank." He turned to a servant. "Bring some soda for our new members, and put in a little of our best digestive tincture.

"There will be no introductions. It is just as easy to win without closer acquaintance. My fat friend over there who runs the bank is the Count of Monte Carlo, and you'll lose nothing by getting into his good graces. I am his very best friend and speak from personal experience. I shall ask our new members to whisper their names into my ear and then take their places at the table incognito. All of us, like yourselves, gentlemen, belong to the higher nobility. *Faites vos jeux*, most honorable gentlemen!"

SEVERAL of the faces appearing around the table were not unfamiliar to Lagerquist. A small blond major and court chamberlain with bow-legs and tremendous mustaches (known to the observer as the principal mentor of the noble sprig who had brought Carla into trouble) was accompanied by a notorious horse dealer named Dyreborg—a veritable monster swathed in checkered flannels. Four fledgling stock brokers from the curb were conducting an auxiliary exchange of their own for the benefit of their unsuspecting customers. There they sat, barbered and manicured to the *n*th degree, smoking huge cigarettes and pulling hundred-crown bills out of their fat pocketbooks. With unfailing regularity two of them placed their money on red, one on black, and one on number twenty-seven. And with unfailing regularity the bank took the money away from them.

Besides these appeared a number of well-known gamblers representing the city's entire outfit of night clubs. Pale from long hours and lack of sleep, they were draped around the green cloth like asparagus and celery around a bowl of lettuce leaves; the "somnambulist" with his blue nose; Joker-Henriksen; Waldemar Hermansen, who used to be one of the city's best known head waiters; and the former stunt rider and film star, Derby Carl, with a large load and yellow spats. Lagerquist knew that the latter acted as a decoy and risked his big stakes at the expense of the bank for the encouragement of the rest.

Finally there was a corporation consisting of four gentlemen from Sweden—a government official, a lawyer, a wholesale merchant and a baron—who had formed a stock company with a paid-up capital of 60,000 crowns. Before doing so, however, they had bought a "system" from the secretary of the Abyssinian legation, known as "the key of King Menelik," at the ridiculously moderate price of 20,000 crowns. Armed with yard-long lists and columns of figures, they had been paying regular Friday night visits to The Merry Wheel in preparation for their compaign against Monte Carlo itself.

This quartet lost tremendously and seemed to think it a part of their system. But Lagerquist, who had learned better in the saloons and gambling hells of the Klondike, began to keep an eye on the roulette, which was manipulated by the Count of Monte Carlo with little movements of almost lightning-like quickness. It was doctored, Lagerquist soon decided,

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the regular recurrence of the figure zero at certain intervals bringing the stakes safely into the clutches of the bank.

AFTER a while the young criminal with the shaven neck who opened the door reappeared in company with a withered little man whom Herr Winkelman addressed as uncle, and those two began to give serious attention to the bar. The clinking of glasses was heard. Swedish punch flowed like liquid honey into cut glass thimbles. Soda popped and sizzled and foamed. The roulette whirled and hummed indefatigably, watched all the time by the slit-like eyes of the fat man in shirt sleeves. The bank won and the members of the corporation shook their heads over the columns of their system. At last they resorted to a table of logarithms and decided mournfully to quintuple their stakes.

The dry light of the green-shaded electric lamps fell coldly on the white faces of the gamblers, on trembling fingers that clutched crumpled rolls of bills, on glasses that showed the marks of lips along their rims, on white shirt fronts that rose and fell spasmodically. Meanwhile the wheel went spinning.

Lagerquist watched calmly the raking in of his last bill by the bank before he rose, looked at his watch, and took up a new position back of the banker. It was half past two. Dark night outside. The whole city asleep. Only the gambling hell awake and active.

Suddenly he put his left hand on the fat shoulder of the banker, who turned around in a manner meant to indicate the seriousness of the offense. Lagerquist merely bent a little farther forward. His free hand descended on the huge pile of bills and coins belonging to the bank.

"THE bank is confiscated," he remarked in a loud, clear voice. "Hands away from the table. No one can touch his stakes. In the name of the law!"

His tone was almost amiable.

A wave of excitement circled the table.

"Well, I'll be damned!" the Swedish government official let out, almost in a whisper.

Lagerquist threw a little disc of brass on the table.

"As you may gather, gentlemen, this joint must be cleaned out. This is my shield. And I must ask for your names. Hands off there!"

The last remark was meant for one of the young brokers who had still to reach the age when his signature would be legally valid.

"And you over there in the gray suit, keep your fingers out of the plate!"

Herr Winkelman breathed hard. His thick wrists seemed to wriggle out of the cavernous cuffs so that a pair of gilt bracelets became visible.

"I guess I've still a word or two to say in this matter," he wheezed threateningly.

"No scandal," the major proclaimed with decision. "No tricks while we are here. We are gentlemen and accept the authority of the police. All we ask is that the detective will show a little discretion."

WINKELMAN made a leap for the door leading to the balcony.

"Here's a way for anybody who wants to get out," he yelled.

Then he turned to get the measure of Lagerquist while one of his hands was fumbling for the electric button placed near the door.

"We'll soon be done with that fellow over there!"

At that moment Lagerquist let out a sharp signal from a silver whistle suspended from his watch chain. A similar signal came back from the outside. Then followed a sound of metal being torn from its fastenings. The door to the balcony was thrown open and a man dressed in a soft hat and a heavy ulster appeared from without.

"Nothing doing!" he hissed at Herr Winkelman as his right fist sent the latter reeling from the electric button toward the bar, where the young criminal with the shaved neck was unconcernedly mixing himself a cocktail out of what remained in the glasses.

Herr Lagerquist picked up the brass disc and pulled out his big note-book.

"The place is surrounded, as you see. We have had our eyes on this place for a good long while. And now I must ask once more for the names and addresses of those present. There's no way out of it."

As soon as Lagerquist had finished this business, and thus come into possession of a

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list of addresses he expected to find very useful later on, he expressed his sincere regrets in tactful terms.

"We shall treat this matter with as much discretion as the circumstances will permit. All the guests are free to return home. Later they will receive an invitation to headquarters, but I think that will involve no more than a light fine for violation of the law against gambling."

Then he poured all the money, as well as the banker's neat little rake, into the bank's big cash box.

"The bank goes with me," he announced. Then he turned to Peter Kopp: "You, No. 212 Rorager, will have to act as witness while I count the money."

The bank contained 9,442 crowns, it was found, not counting a counterfeit five-dollar piece, put in by Herr Lagerquist himself.

"And now I bid you good night, gentlemen! Rorager, you will have to carry the roulette."

Peter Kopp took his burden rather badly, as the roulette, with the bowl into which it was fitted, had the form of a huge wash basin, and finally Lagerquist was forced to take a taxi in spite of the after-midnight price schedule.

LAGERQUIST lived in a two-room apartment on the Southern Boulevard. Thither they repaired, and on the top of Lagerquist's writing-desk their loot was divided into two small parts of 4,721 crowns each. The counterfeit five-dollar piece remained undivided.

"Suppose we use the merry wheel to decide who shall have it," suggested Lagerquist as he poured out a glass of port. Then he put the roulette on the table and gave his guest a brief lecture on how to work it.

"I felt sorry for you," he said, "while you had to stand out there on the balcony with a throat as dry as a ghost's and I sat inside playing roulette like a little count. It's a tremendously exciting business, I tell you. Attention now! The stake is five dollars this time—you on black and I on red."

Needless to say, the coin went to Lagerquist, who was handling the wheel and had observed the fat banker long enough to learn the little trick by which it could be made to stop according to the operator's need and desire.

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"Sorry, Kopp," he remarked pulling out a ten-crown bill. "But if you want another chance, I am at your service. Come on—here's a glass and a cigar to help along."

"It's exciting, sure enough," cried Kopp, red in the face from inner tension. "It's like—like—fishing watches out of a show window. You don't never know if you've got real gold or just gold-filled on the hook."

At the end of two hours the 9,442 crowns and the five-dollar piece of tin formed a single pile in front of the coldly polite host.

"THIS you can keep for an eye-opener," Herr Lagerquist said, flinging a one-crown piece across the table to Kopp.

"Yes, you're the guy to catch the suckers all right," Kopp rejoined gloomily, as he pocketed the coin.

"Everybody has to follow his own line," Lagerquist retorted sententiously.

"Sure," admitted Kopp with a sigh. "There ain't nothing wrong about that."

"Good night, Kopp," Lagerquist said curtly, scraping the pile of money into his desk drawer and turning on the hall light.

Kopp merely nodded and slunk noiselessly down the stairway. Lagerquist poured an extra portion of wine for himself in the glass holding his toothbrush. Then he retired to bed in the adjoining room.

He woke about eleven o'clock the next morning with a heavy head. Yawning and glancing mournfully at the empty wine bottle, he padded on bare feet across the room to his writing-desk in order to have a joyful look at his hoard.

The drawer had been opened, but so cautiously and painlessly, one might say, that no damage had been done to the desk. A close survey of the front door revealed slight traces of a skilfully wielded lock-pick. There was no sign of the 9,441 crowns in the drawer. But the counterfeit five-dollar piece was there, placed in the center of a piece of paper on which appeared the following words in Peter Kopp's somewhat clumsy hand:

This is for your eye-opener!
Most respectfully,
PETER KOPP,
Expert specialist.

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Introducing a New Author

The King's Coat

They Had Great Plans for That Coat—but the First Owner Had Need of It Himself

By Artemus S. Calloway

BLACKCOAT was the blackest—and largest—black bear the South Alabama swamp had ever known. Men had time and again matched their wits against his only to lose. More than one hunter had sworn to take the glossy coat worn by this king of bears and each boaster had been forced to leave the swamp declaring himself beaten.

But on this warm sunshiny afternoon at the tag end of the hunting season Blackcoat was not thinking of men who hunted nor of the color of his coat. Only one thing mattered to him just now, and that was the rich store of wild honey in the aged sweetgum.

Hind claws holding tightly to the tough bark, left foreleg encircling a branch, right forepaw busily engaged tearing away the partly rotten wood barring him from the delicious contents of the hive, Blackcoat moistened eager lips in hungry anticipation.

A heavy cloud of angry, fighting bees swarmed about him, but to these Blackcoat paid but scant heed. His heavy coat offered more than satisfactory protection. Now and again he ceased operations long enough to slap away those that came too near his eyes, but this attended to he calmly resumed his task.

And finally it was completed. The right paw disappeared inside the hollow and then was withdrawn bearing a great chunk of dripping, delicious sweetness. The old bear feasted.

Twenty minutes later, sweet tooth satisfied, Blackcoat walked slowly away from the tree, pausing occasionally to lick a remaining drop of honey from a paw. Twice he smashed bees that had become entangled in his rich, glossy coat. Afterward he went away to a quiet sunny place for a nap. And there Blackcoat remained until the following morning.

It was the whistle of the little river steamboat that awakened him. The boat had never failed to excite the old bear's curiosity. For many years that little boat had been making trips up and down the river, ordinarily with a freight barge in tow. Time and again, safely hidden by the undergrowth lining the river bank, Blackcoat had stopped to observe the boat—the people on it.

He rose to his feet. An instant later he was shuffling away toward the river. Once—in a water-oak grove—he paused to look about him. Another time he skirted a projecting arm of the great canebrake which extended southward for miles. Then he paused at a smelly slough, looked about him, went on.

A FEW minutes later, well back in a vine-tangled ivy thicket, he watched the little boat appear around a bend of the river, observed the black cloud pouring from the smokestack. His keen eyes caught sight of the roustabouts on deck, watched as the boat ran within a few feet of the shore, stopped at a woodrack to take on fuel. He saw the boxes and barrels on the freight barge and may have found something

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peculiar in the fact that while men were running about the deck of the boat there was no one on the barge.

Not until the boat had taken on a supply of wood and puffed out of sight upstream did Blackcoat move on. But move he finally did, with all the dignity belonging to a king of the swamp, stopping from time to time to feast on winter huckleberries.

And then his sensitive nose caught something that caused his entire body to quiver with excitement. Blackcoat eased gently forward, his feet making never a sound, the bushes about him swaying gently, as from a summer breeze.

Suddenly he paused. Then, with almost unbelievable quickness for one so large and clumsy-appearing, he catapulted through the air. The slumbering half-wild razorback never knew the cause of his exit from swamp life. But Blackcoat allotted but scant time to worry over this trifling detail. Fresh pork was a great delicacy—and now it was his. Low rumbles of satisfaction issued from his throat. Appetite finally sated, he slept.

WHEN Blackcoat again went forth to forage he sought the canebrake. There were tender shoots, succulent roots—always excellent after a pork feast. For several minutes he rambled easily on, stopping now and again to nibble at a toothsome morsel. And then he came to a halt, with his head erect, keen nose and ears alert.

For a brief instant only he stood thus. Then he was off, a black streak through the rustling canes. From far behind came a booming sinister sound—the trailing chorus of bear dogs. Somewhere near the dogs were the hunters, ready to pour hot lead into Blackcoat's body once he should be sighted.

Season after season had Blackcoat been hunted, until now he was thoroughly familiar with the ways of men and their dogs. There were other bears in the swamp but the hunters wanted Blackcoat. He was the bear that had shamed them, killed their dogs, made his escape. Only two weeks before Blackcoat had been hunted, but after bagging two smaller bears, the enemy had withdrawn.

Blackcoat had not known that this withdrawal was only temporary; that it had only been to strengthen the pack with older and more experienced dogs; that now there were only three days remaining of the hunting season, and that those urging the dogs on were determined to get him before the law should again drop its protecting arms about his kind.

He struck a little trail made by himself and other creatures of the wild, followed this for a quarter of a mile, reached a point where it was intersected by another, left the main cane-lined alleyway for the smaller. An hour later Blackcoat had made his way behind the dogs.

But he was forced to exercise great caution. Scattered about the swamp just at the edge of the great canebrake, were men with rifles waiting for the slightest glimpse of that glossy coat they coveted. Each hunter had been placed by an experienced guide where he would be likely to get a shot; the dogs would be certain to run the bear from cover, and death, eager, expectant, awaited.

THE wind disclosed to him the whereabouts of one hunter, and Blackcoat, passing within seventy-five feet of the waiting man, saw him without himself being seen. Ten minutes later he passed another.

And greatly to the discomfiture of the hunters the old bear remained in the brake. He was not going to forsake cover until forced to do so. Twice before he had narrowly escaped death because of having left the canes.

Darkness came and the dogs were practically dragged from the hunt. And while Blackcoat did not know it, one of his kind was carried by the hunters to their camp. A less wary cousin, startled by the nearness of the yelping dogs, had sought the open, died.

But the hunters were not particularly interested in the bear that they had killed. He was not Blackcoat. They had in the beginning carried their dogs to Blackcoat's known haunts and the moment the pack opened up the guides were positive that it was the big bear they were after. There were two of the dogs—both old hunters—that had trailed Blackcoat for the past two seasons, and these always barked differently whenever they were following him.

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With the coming of the new day the hunt was resumed. The dogs were loosed near the spot where they had been called from the trail the afternoon before, and half an hour later an occasional hoarse bellow told that they were slowly picking up the scent. And finally all were pursuing the bear in full cry.

Blackcoat heard, and knew instinctively that they were on his trail. He set about to outwit them. The two older dogs—the two that had hunted him for so long—worried the bear. Added to the familiar danger was a new one.

There was one dog in the pack—young and inexperienced—that was forever losing the trail, bounding off in search of the scent, and before nine o'clock he had twice stumbled upon the old bear's new path, made in backtracking. His quick, sharp cry on both occasions told that this was the fresher track and each time drew the pack to him, thus eliminating the fruit of Blackcoat's cunning. On one of these occasions the bear was forced to pass perilously near a waiting hunter.

TOWARD the middle of the afternoon the same thing happened again and for a brief period Blackcoat was forced to leave the canebrake and take to the comparatively open swamp. And it was just as he dashed across a little stream, passed through a scrub-oak thicket, that a rifle was fired.

Crazed with fear Blackcoat whirled back into the oaks and it was there that he met the swiftest of the pack. There, too, Blackcoat left him.

Somehow he regained the canebrake. He crossed the trail of another bear, which caused confusion among the dogs and made it possible for him, for the time being, to elude them.

When night finally came he was well-nigh worn out, and when the hunters and the dogs left the brake, he dropped in a heap, and slept.

Two days of the hunt were gone. There remained only one day of the hunting season. A hurry call had been sent out for additional dogs. Blackcoat must fall before another night. His coat should grace a hunter's den, the story of the kill be related to eager ears.

Blackcoat, of course, knew nothing of this. But he heard additional dogs behind him when the chase opened the following morning, scented waiting hunters in new places. The guides had planned well, placed hunters in the canebrake, along the well-beaten animal trails that he would naturally use.

On each occasion Blackcoat scented the hunter before reaching him but, also, he was forced to leave the path and break his way through the dense cane, which not only retarded his speed but left a better trail for the dogs to follow. Naturally the pack experienced considerable trouble in making its way along here but its speed was not lessened to the extent of that of the road-maker.

But Blackcoat each time regained the little lanes and went on. And soon he appeared, instinctively, to realize that if the hunters were now actually in the brake they would not be waiting on the outer edges. There he went and out into the swamp, among ponds, sloughs, matted jungle he laid a tangled trail, while the dogs were still yelping in the brake. By the time they had left the cane he was in it again.

IT TOOK the dogs fully an hour to straighten out the tangled maze in the thickets and around the ponds and get back after Blackcoat. By this time he was some distance away.

But he was becoming tired, very tired. And never before had he been so frightened. He must go on and on. Then it was that the catastrophe came.

With the dogs close behind, the wind against him, Blackcoat stumbled upon one of the hunters.

Both were frightened. The hunter fired—but too quickly. The bullet found the old bear's right foreleg. He fell, struggled to his feet, went bravely on, leaving a trail of blood behind. The excited hunter fired again—missed.

The wound, while not necessarily dangerous or—provided nature should be allowed to take its course—serious, was exceedingly painful. Blackcoat's speed was lessened. He was feeling faint, and panicky, for the dogs now had struck the blood-trail, and were yelping for his life.

One of the younger ones caught up with him, leaped for his throat—went

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down a lifeless, battered mass. And Blackcoat went on.

THE bear found a stream running through the canebrake, swam down it a short distance, eluded the dogs for the time being. The noon hour passed, but the hunters, in their absorption, were unaware of their hunger.

The dogs were again yelping about, picking up the scent. Blackcoat could not hold out much longer. Broken canes irritated his wound. Vines twined about it, cut the raw flesh. Insects worried him.

The chase was nearing its close. The hunters realized it. The dogs, too, appeared to know it. And instinct told the bear that the end was near at hand.

Great sobs of pain and weariness burst from his throat as he forced himself on and on. From behind came the cry of the dogs. Now and then there came to his ears the shout of a guide as he signaled to one of his fellows.

Low-hung clouds in the south blotted out the sun. There was the hint of rain in the air but it would not come before night. Too late to blot out Blackcoat's trail. Too late to save him.

Startled birds voiced their protests as the great black form lumbered through the canebrake. The sharp eyes of a mink watched Blackcoat as he passed that fierce little warrior's hiding place. A wildcat crept to the entrance of his den and listened to the hoarse mouthings of the dogs, showed his long teeth in an ugly grin.

Once a startled deer bounded away ahead of the bear. But he had no cause for worry. Blackcoat was too busy trying to save his own life to attempt that of another swamp creature.

On came the dogs. They, it seemed, were tireless.

Suddenly the old bear stopped. Stopped and looked about him. He hadn't known that he was so near the river.

But instinct told him that trying to swim the stream would be folly. The river was wide and he was too tired to swim rapidly. Besides, his wounded leg would retard his speed. The dogs would be on him before he was half-way across. And the men would arrive on the bank.

He turned about, crossed and recrossed his old trail. Then, as he heard the dogs, turned toward the river. He reached it with the dogs only a few hundred yards behind.

WHEN a guide and two hunters reached the stream the dogs were running wildly up and down its bank trying to pick up a lost trail. And the men could not understand. The bear had completely disappeared.

More, he was not out in the stream. The dogs would have seen him. The hunters could see him if he were there now. Blackcoat was gone.

An hour later night arrived. The hunters had to admit that the hunt was over and none had claimed the king's coat. The old bear was now protected by the law. The next morning they would leave the swamp—defeated.

They did not know that Blackcoat had heard the little steamboat blow—the little boat with its trailing barge, its bundles of freight, the barge that seldom held one of his enemies, man.

They did not know that he had heard the boat blow preparatory to pulling out from the woodrack—as he had heard the signal on countless occasions before—that he had raced there and just as the barge, unoccupied by man as usual, eased out into the stream, had jumped into the water and then by great effort, clambered aboard. And that as the boat chugged off downstream it carried Blackcoat away—an unsuspected passenger on the towed barge, a passenger hidden by the freight about him from all eyes on the boat.

But Blackcoat knew it. Knew that he was on that barge. And knew that soon the barge was around the bend and hugging the farther shore.

Then it was that, unseen and unheard, he slipped overboard, swam slowly shoreward, gained the fastness of the swamp across the river from his enemies. He ambled away to rest and nurse his wound—in a week or so he would be himself again.

The hunters could no longer harm. The season in which they might pursue Blackcoat was closed. And none had claimed the king's coat.

Another story of wild life by this gifted new author will appear in an early number.

Everybody's Magazine, November, 1923

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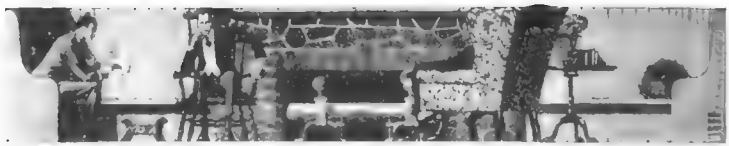

Everybody's Chimney Corner

Where Reader, Author and Editor
Gather to Talk Things Over

FROM Louise Saunders, whose first story, "Little Sacrifices," is on page 10, comes the lament that her life contains nothing worthy to be described. One doubts it—the woman who has seen such poignant and significant truths in the lives of others as are recorded in this unusual story is one worth knowing. However, one must know such people upon their own terms, if at all.

Perhaps [she writes] you might say that I have always been interested in the theater, and that, until now, I have concentrated on plays, and that the story you are publishing is my first. You might say, too, that I do my writing in a most adorable place, a little theater of my own, decorated by Jonas Lie. It has only been used once as a theater, when one of my plays, "Figureheads," was given there "with tremendous success" according to the local paper, but the scene that Jonas Lie painted is still there. It represents a room in a high tower with a round casement that is most certainly magic opening on very blue and perilous seas. An Irish novelist once told me that the place was haunted. I have never seen any ghosts there, but I feel that a person with more power than I possess might easily summon them, and sometimes I feel that dark-browed Melpomene may be standing in the corner against the black and orange wall, and Calliope perhaps is leaning far out of the window, the wind blowing her hair!

Such a place ought to inspire far more beautiful things than I have ever done, and as for realism—there is always the clucking of chickens below, often the rattle of ash cans and the rasp of delivery wagons on the gravel as they drive up to the back door.

The lyric in "Little Sacrifices" is evidence of this author's command of verse; she has to her credit a number of poems as well as a book of plays, "Magic Lanterns," published last spring.

ARTHUR MILLS ("The Tame Cat," page 49) is an Englishman. He was born in 1887, and is a public-school man—having gone to Wellington. From that school he went to Sandhurst and obtained his commission in 1908. He served in China in 1912 and 1913, and, resigning from the service in 1914, hurried back when the war broke out to rejoin his old regiment.

He was severely wounded in the first Ypres battle, and was invalided home, spending something like two years in hospitals. He was not idle during this time, however, turning out one book describing the fighting after the inconclusive Battle of the Aisne, and another called "Hospital Days." In 1916 he married Lady Dorothy Walpole—whose grandfather was an American, Daniel Corbin of Spokane.

The following year Mr. Mills was able to go back to active service, and he served until the Armistice with the Imperial Camel Corps and the General Staff Intelligence in the Transjordania operations. Newspaper work in London followed, until in 1921 he abandoned it to concentrate upon writing, publishing a novel, "Pillars of Salt," in 1922, and a volume of short stories the next year. He spent some months of 1923 in South America, sending letters to the *Daily Mail*, and gathering material for a series of stories upon which he is now at work.

TOD ROBBINS ("For His Lady Friend," page 141) speaks up for himself:

I began my literary career as a poet [he writes]. There is a distinction in being the best or the worst of one's species. I could have laid claim to the latter.

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Arthur Mills ("The Tame Cat," page 49) is a good deal of a world traveler.

Reginald Wright Kauffman (page 105) calls Andrew John, 2nd, one of his two best works.

Louise Saunders ("Little Sacrifices," page 2) does most of her writing in a theater.

At preparatory school, where I played end on the football team and held the New York Interscholastic pole-vault record, I was careful to conceal my poetic aspirations. It did not seem to me that poetry and pole-vaulting mixed very well together. The other youths who rode that winged steed, Pegasus, were referred to contemptuously in the scholastic vernacular as "greasy grinds."

Later, at Washington and Lee University, I discovered that I could pursue both my athletic and literary careers without fear of ridicule. I was one of the editors of the year book and captain of the track team at the same time and I was able to attend to both without having to don false whiskers. It was here that I met "the lightweight champion of France" and fought my first great bloodless battle in the ring.

One day a stranger arrived in town—a short, swarthy young man in one of those suits which loudly proclaim that their owners have had a checkered career. It was noised abroad that this stranger was none other than "the lightweight champion of France," and that he was giving a boxing exhibition that night in the opera house.

It so happened that a few of us attended a fraternity celebration at which we dined not wisely, but too well. The result was that we arrived at the opera house a trifle elevated and keen to see bloodshed. We were disappointed. "The Lightweight Champion of France" had chosen an antagonist unworthy of him—a gawky, knock-kneed, hollow-chested country lad who held up his hands like one's maiden aunt if she were suddenly forced to look into the muzzle of Jesse James' deadly six-shooter. Hisses, groans, and cat-calls arose on all sides.

A Latin is quick to show resentment. "The Lightweight Champion of France" was no exception. He turned to us and growled:

"Say, if any of youse college guys think youse can handle de mitts better than this gink, why, step up! I ain't takin' on no two-hundred-pounders—see? but if there's a joker in the house what don't scale more'n one hundred and fifty, let 'im step up 'cause he's my meat!"

He paused and circled the theater with ferocious, bloodshot eyes. A profound silence followed his words. This was a direct challenge leveled at the student body! Suddenly I felt a punch in the ribs. Turning, I met the fixed regard of a classmate.

"Take the frog on, Tod!" he whispered hotly. "You can trim him all right!"

Proudly, I accepted the challenge; proudly, if a trifle unsteadily, I mounted the stage and disappeared behind the scenery to put on a pair of green tights which the manager of the opera house was thoughtful enough to provide.

But, as I disrobed, I seemed to take off this pride with my clothes. A cold wind swept in through the

"The Lightweight Champion of France" (alias Tod Robbins, author of "For His Lady Friend," page 141), in fighting trim.

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wings; all the good wine went out of my head. Suppose this fellow with the tri-colored flag for a belt really was "The Lightweight Champion of France"! I looked into the mirror and noticed that in the last few minutes I had apparently lost all my spring sunburn. But philosophy bore me up. I could hold my own with the average amateur—well, if this chap really was "The Lightweight Champion of France" surely I would lose no prestige.

Thinking in this wise, I expanded my chest, stuck out my jaw, frowned ferociously and, making every muscle in my body stand forth as prominently as possible, swaggered out on the stage.

"The Lightweight Champion of France" didn't seem such an imposing figure as I had first imagined. He was no taller than myself, and there was the suggestion of a corporation protruding above his tight tri-colored belt. For some moments he stood staring at me with his mouth slightly agape. Then he strode up to the manager of the opera house, who was standing in one of the wings, and whispered something to him. The manager nodded, grinned and then stepped out and addressed the house.

"Ladies and gentlemen, Monsieur La Force begs to be excused from meeting your champion to-night. At the moment he finds himself indisposed and therefore——"

A roar went up from the throats of two hundred Washington and Lee students. Men began leaping up and advancing threateningly toward the stage. A riot seemed imminent.

Now the manager of the opera house took a hand. The moment was ripe for oratory. He took advantage of it.

"Silence, gentlemen!" he cried in his great booming voice. "I have an announcement to make. To-night a rare honor has fallen to the lot of one of you! Once again, young American manhood has proven itself supreme; once again we have snatched a crown from a foreign brow! Gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure to announce to you that one of your college, Mr. Tod Robbins of Washington and Lee University, has just won the Lightweight Pugilistic Championship of France by default!"

The truth came out the following morning. "The Lightweight Champion of France" was a ham actor, who had lost his job in a traveling burlesque show. Broke, stranded in a near-by town, he had evolved the bright idea of posing as a champion pugilist and giving a boxing exhibition to raise the wherewithal to get back to Broadway.

In a sense, perhaps, that doesn't tell much about Tod Robbins. Yet, if one will read just a word or two between the lines——!

ARTEMUS CALLOWAY is introduced to the magazine in his first story, "The King's Coat," on page 174. This is the first of several animal stories by Mr. Calloway soon to appear. Concerning himself he makes these remarks:

I discovered rather early in life that I had absolutely nothing to do with my advent into this world and determined then and there not to worry about anything I found in it.

I've been a pack-peddler, sawmill laborer, assistant traffic manager on a railroad just as wide but not quite as long as the New York Central. Worked in a bank, spent several years in Central America. It was while there that I returned to Alabama (my own state) and married, taking my bride back to the tropics with me. She didn't like it down there, and while of course nobody bosses me, we didn't remain very long. Since April, 1917, Birmingham, Alabama, has been our home.

I love the outdoors. I like animals. Through studying them I've learned—I think—quite a bit about myself and others.

I've never had any very exciting adventures. Worst frightened I've ever been was once when there was some talk of a revolution in Honduras, and I was held up by some armed men—after dark. After I'd died nineteen different deaths, each one worse than the others, I learned that they were merely asking for a match—or something like that. The next worst scare was when I awoke one night in that same country to find a wild-eyed animal sitting on my chest, its hot breath fanning my cheeks. That pet monkey came near being frightened to death at the yell I turned loose.

I've only one real kick against any one or anything. I often feel that the activities of those hare-brained reformers who try to force others to do as they would have them should be curbed. A man becomes great only through fighting life's battles. If you legislate everything out of his life he won't have any life left and will become a replica of the dear brainless souls who want this world made a paradise because they themselves haven't the moral courage to do right—to win the fight that is worth winning

THE Roll Call of the American Red Cross will begin on Armistice Day and last until Thanksgiving. Which means that every one will have an opportunity, between November eleventh and November twenty-ninth, to renew membership in the Red Cross at a cost of one dollar, obtaining a badge—and the sense of having in one important respect done one's duty.

The Red Cross is not, of course, a war-time organization only. It does an enormous amount of work all the time.

It cares, still, for a good many disabled soldiers and their families. It carries public-health work into a great many communities too small to have health organizations of their own. Its nurses have helped and are helping to bring many children into the world; it is prompt in giving aid when disaster comes—whether by fire or flood or storm.

It seems safe to say that there is no American community which does not owe something daily to the Red Cross. And it is hard to see how any American can feel very comfortable who is not a member of an organization so far-reaching in its efforts to improve the ways of American life.

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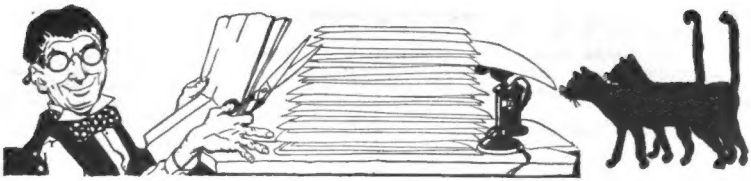

Prose *and* Worse, *by* Gridley Adams

DO YOU BELIEVE IN SIGNS?

In Lima, Ohio: "*Eugene Bean.*"
Undertakers of Morning Sun, Ia.: "*Bright & Early.*"
In Thief River Falls, Minn.: "*Awry & Ketchum.*"
Undertaker of Elkhart, Ind.: "*Philmore Graves.*"
On W. 25th Street, Cleveland, restaurant: "*Feeled Cabage. Beeff Steak. Rabic Stew. Veel Chops. Coffe. Cake.*"
On Bulletin Board of Chicago Beach Hotel: "*Charity Bridge Party for benefit of destitute family's at Chicago Beach Hotel.*"
On store in Schenectady, N. Y.: "*Paints, Oils, Drugs, Apples & Chocolates.*"
Headline in Humboldt, Kan., *Union*: "*Satterlee Scart Silly.*"
President of American Bottlers of Carbonated Beverages: "*C. V. Rainwater.*"
Married in Hartford, Conn.: "*Toothacker—Agony.*"

(*Charles City Press*)

FOR SALE—Good cow, town broke.

Any udder accomplishments?

(*Ohio State Journal*)

Membership in the Y. W. C. A. entitles girls to become privates in the military department. The uniform will consist of an arm band and trench cap.

As "private" as a goldfish.

(*From a University of Wisconsin student's thesis*)

"Anthony carried about Cytheris, an actress, one of the worst in Rome at the time, in an open litter as his second wife, and besides that had seven other litters of friends, male or female."

Strictly *litterary*.

(*From adv. of a shower bath-brush*)

"Let us send one of our salesmen to call upon you and demonstrate these brushes in actual use."

My dear, I should expire!

(*Alma, Mich., Journal*)

A college friendship which ripened into a love affair was ended last week, Saturday, with the marriage of Miss Vinnie Booth of this city to Mr. Wade Frost of Tecumseh.

When friendship is no more.

(*Oak Park, Ill., Oak Leaves*)

"Baby is Born—No Clothing."

"And the moon rose over the city, behind the dark church tower."

(*Galesburg, Ill., Mail*)

"Ethel McKee Takes Glen Reynolds as Husband for Life."

That would seem to settle Glen.

(*St. Charles Times*)

A ten-pound baby girl was born to Mr. and Mrs. Henry E. Smith of 50 West 4th street Tuesday evening.

Entrance to the house was gained through a window opened with a "jimmy."

What! Bandit storks?

(*Paxton, Ill., Register*)

About 100 plates were laid and at each plate was a knife and fork.

What's wrong with this picture? Why the forks?

(*Chicago News*)

The styles of to-day are exceedingly pretty and becoming if not followed too closely.

Ten feet back is about a safe distance.

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(*Moline Dispatch*)

The marriage of Miss Cora Meimerstorm and Fred Storm, both of Geneseo, took place Monday afternoon.

Weather Note: Look out for squalls.

(*Mineral Point, Wis., Democrat*)

Mr. and Mrs. Wilbur Liddicut of this village are the proud and happy parents of a pair of triplets, born July 17.

As Sir Lancelot whispered to Shylark:—"Curfew must *not* ring to-night."

(*At a Hartford Theater*)

We were talking across the aisle. Presently a girl who sat alone leaned over and said: "You and the lady take this seat. I'm not together."

(*Chicago Tribune*)

To Rent—Very large double twin beds, private. Call evenings. "Sunnyside ——"

As the goldfish murmured to the tadpole, as they swam together through their seaweed food:—"What is so private as a double twin bed?"

(*Overheard in a Chicago dept. store elevator*)

"Are the washable little boys' suits on this floor?"

Back in the car.

(*Terre Haute Tribune*)

Wanted—Nurse for children over 18 years old.

Good night, nurse!

(*Woman's World*)

In This Number
An Illuminating Article on
Twilight Sleep
For Small Town and Country Dwellers.

Referred to the anti-Daylight savers.

(*Martin, S. D., Messenger*)

Married at the church at Allen by Rev. Amos Ross, Levi Red Owl of Kyle to Miss Sadie Whirlwind Horse of Allen. Their many friends wish them all kinds of happiness.

'Sall right, unless she "takes the bit in her mouth."

(*Buck Creek, Ind., News*)

The Buck Creek K. of P. lodge will give an oyster and ice cream supper Saturday night at their hall. Also a free lecture on "Diseases of Swine," by F. V. Hawkins of Indianapolis.

A swill time will be had by all.

(*Enderlin, N. D., Independent*)

Born—On April 24th, to Mr. and Mrs. Palmer Skramstad, residing near Nome, a fine baby boy.

When this matter is brought to their attention in the right light they will willingly stop the practice.

And the editor never did come back.

(*Sign in vestibule of house in Knoxville*)

"Mrs. Belle Martin. Bell out of order."

Doctor, or electrician?

(*Washington Post*)

One large room, furnished; suitable for two gentlemen or bachelors.

There's distinction for you.

(*Middletown, Conn., Penny Press*)

Middlefield—Miss Alice Hart of Boston and Messrs. Byron Calkins of Kansas City and Walter Calkins of Fort Worth, Texas, who have been guests of Dr. and Mrs. Augur, have gone to Durham for a visit.

Bored?

(*Chicago Tribune*)

"How Can A Man Fight For His Country Without Pants?"

Hoot, mon! as Walter Scott once said to King Bruce.

(*Owosso, Mich., News*)

Wanted—Married man by the month for the Winter. Call 534 Green.

My dear, did you ever see the ocean looking finer?

(*Ottumwa Courier*)

Wanted—Will give a good home to a nice country kitten. 109 North Ash.

Keep her in the barn, and let her sleep on the meow.

(*Sullivan, Ind., Union*)

I lost my trousers Friday evening, somewhere between J. F. Douthitt's store on north side and law office; while the thermometer was hovering around the zero mark. Will pay liberal reward for their return if the cold weather continues. Gilbert Gambill.

An early-morning gambill.

(*Allan, Sask., Tribune*)

The vestry meeting of St. George's accomplished some really good work on Tuesday night, the stovepipes of the church stove being swept within and without.

"The usual collection was taken."

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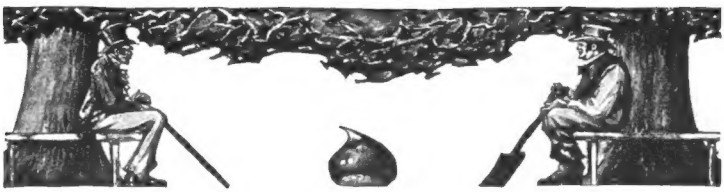

Everybody's Chestnut Tree

EDITOR'S NOTE: Though the sign is the Chestnut Tree, no story is barred by its youth. We will gladly pay for available ones. Address all manuscripts to "The Chestnut Tree," enclosing stamped addressed envelope.

A MAN in North Carolina was saved from conviction for horse-stealing by the powerful plea of his lawyer. After his acquittal by the jury the lawyer asked, "Honor bright, Bill, you did steal that horse, didn't you?"

"Now look here, judge," was the reply, "I always did think I stole that horse, but since I heard your speech to that jury, I'll be dawggoned if I ain't got doubts about it!"

TWO New Orleans darkies, hearing how easy was the life of a deck-hand on a tramp steamer, signed on. After a long, hard struggle through rough seas the ship finally headed back to the good old U. S. As they were nearing New York harbor, Sam got to talking to his pal.

"Does you know what I's gwine to do as soon as I gets to Noo Yawk? I's gwine to get me a white hat, an' white shoes, an' some white sox, an' a white suit, an' den I's gwine go get me a white gal, an' I's gwine to walk right down de White Way as big as anybody."

"I ain' gwine to do dat a-tall," replied Rastus. "I's gwine to get me a black hat, and black shoes, and black sox, an' a black suit an' a black gal——"

"What you-all gwine do dat for, nigger?"

"Why, I's gwine to you-all's funeral."

OLD COLORED MAMMY: I's wants a ticket fo' Florence.

TICKET AGENT (after ten minutes' turning over railway guides): Where is Florence?

OLD COLORED MAMMY: Settin' over dar on de bench.

"SPEAKING of railroad service in Georgia," said a traveling salesman of Baltimore, "one day I was waiting for a train in a small town of that state. One hour, two hours, three hours passed, but no train pulled in. I was about to negotiate for a vehicle to drive me to the place I wished to make, when the station agent said:

"'I wouldn't go to that trouble, sir. The train'll be along soon now.'

"'What makes you think so?'

"'Well,' he answered, 'I'm pretty certain of it. Here comes the conductor's dog now.'"

THE fond mother approached the teacher anxiously.

"Oh, Professor, don't you think my dear little Randolph will ever learn to draw?"

"No, madam—that is, unless you harness him to a truck," calmly replied the professor.

DUB: Heard you and your wife quarreling last night. What was the trouble?

VET: Oh, I was just A. W. O. L.

CLANCY stopped his friend Sweeney on the street one day.

"I hear you've moved, Sweeney. How do you like your new place?"

"Well, Mike, it costs a lot, but there is a lot goes with it. An' then thim new conveniences are great things. Sure we've been livin' a month there now and the first day we lit the gas range in the kitchen and it ain't out yet."

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THE class in Roman History had been directed to write a paragraph on "Persecution of the Christians during the third century."

Wrote one youth, after deep thought, "Persecution of the Christians during the third century"—

"It was something fierce."

IT WAS the dear old lady's first ride in a taxi, and she watched with growing alarm as the driver continually put his hand outside the car as a signal to the traffic following. At last she became exasperated.

"Young man," she said, "you look after that car of yours and watch where you're driving. I'll tell you when it starts raining."

THE census taker made his way with difficulty through the crowd of children clustered in the tenement yard. He dealt with Mrs. McAfferty, and finally asked: "And how many children have you, Mrs. McAfferty?"

"Now, lemme see," answered she, wiping her hands, "there's Tommy, Harry, Dick, Lizzie, and then Joe. Yeh, we have Jimmy, Minnie, an'——"

"Come, come, just give me the number!" he said impatiently.

"Oh, we don't hafta number them," replied Mrs. McAfferty indignantly. "We ain't run out o' names yet."

THE prohibition officers had come to the door of Mose Jackson's house on the quest of an illicit still. The door was opened by Mose's youngest boy, a pickaninny about seven years of age.

"We're prohibition officers, son," said one of the men, "and we've come to search your father's house for liquor."

"You won't find no lickah, heah, boss," said the boy. "Why, we jes' put the mash to soak las' night!"

BESSIE, aged four years, who was downtown with her mother, caught sight of a baldheaded man.

"Oh, mother," she exclaimed in high shrill tones, "just see that man! He hasn't a hair on his head. Isn't it sad?"

"Hush!" replied her mother. "He will hear you."

"Oh," replied Bessie in subdued tones, "doesn't he know it?"

A MULE auction took place in a ring [illegible] closure, access to which was by one s[illegible] gateway, and considerable amusement [illegible] caused among the onlookers by the ef[illegible] of the men in charge of the animals to [illegible] them to go through it. One mule espec[illegible] seemed obstinately bent on doing anyth[illegible] and everything but pass through t[illegible] gateway.

"Want any help?" shouted one of the bystanders, as the mule-driver rested a moment.

"No," answered the driver, "but I'd l[illegible] to know how Noah ever got *two* of th[illegible] blighters into the ark."

THE cap'n and mate of the *Sailing S*[illegible] were at odds. They scowled whenever t[illegible] met, and seized the opportunity of sco[illegible] off one another with fiendish glee. E[illegible] took a turn at making the day's entrie[illegible] the log-book, and the mate, when mak[illegible] his entries, found in the cap'n's handwrit[illegible] the words:

August 5, 1923—Mate drunk.

He stared at it wrathfully a mom[illegible] Then he took up the pen and wrote:

August 6, 1923—Captain sober.

A DOCTOR was called in to see a n[illegible] who was down with influenza.

"What's I gwine to gib him?" asked [illegible] wife.

"Give him whisky," the physician [illegible] sponded.

"How much do it cost?"

When the doctor named the price of g[illegible]l whisky per quart the wife remarked:

"I can bury him cheaper dan dat."

JOCK McLEOD, who loved nothing be[illegible] than to sit beside a quiet pool, rod in h[illegible], and wait for the fish to bite, had been [illegible]sorbed in his favorite occupation f[illegible]n early in the morning until long past n[illegible]n of a sultry summer day. A neighbo[illegible] farmer, observing that the fisherman [illegible] enjoying apparently no luck at all, [illegible]dertook to remind Jock that it was past[illegible] lunch hour.

"Ye'll have missed your dinner compl[illegible], mon," he said, "and still ye have no [illegible]. Why don't ye go home?"

The fisherman spat solemnly at his lin[illegible]

"I have three wor-r-rms left," he repl[illegible], "that I wouldna let go to waste."

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